The Sacraments in the Christian Life

by

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THE NEWMAN PRESS
WESTMINSTER, MARYLAND
1955

First printing, 1954
Second printing, 1955

This book originally appeared under the title *Les Sacrements dans la Vie Chrétienne* and was published by Desclée, de Brouwer & Cie, Bruges, Belgium.

Nihil obstat: EDWARD A. CERNY, S.S., D.D.
Censor librorum

Imprimatur: FRANCIS P. KEOUGH, D.D.
Archbishop of Baltimore

JULY 19, 1954

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 54-9606

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Printed in the United States of America

To

Mary Assumed Into Heaven

Translator to Reader

NOT, PERHAPS, since the the time of the saintly monk and abbot, Dom Marmion (to whose life and writings he has a deep personal devotion), has there appeared on the spiritual horizon a writer of Father Philipon's special merit, blending as he does so happily the highest theological doctrine with the widest practical appeal. At the same time, it should be noted, the author of this volume is not merely a Dom Marmion *redivivus,* in mid-century dress. For the world has not stood still this generation and a half, and truths that are ever old must also be ever made new. Thus, though in all humility he would disclaim the role, in many ways Father Philipon himself is that other, that present-day, Paul who he declares is needed in the modern world to preach again the Apostle's impassioned hymn to charity and give resurgent peal to his stirring call to Christian combat with the powers and principalities of darkness.

Father Philipon never loses sight of the fact (and this is part of his merit) that, if the Christian is to live like Christ, it must be brought home to him, in season and out, how by the several graces of the sacraments he is a Christ, another Christ. *Agere sequitur esse*—Action follows being. In the present work, as in his writings generally, the author sets forth eloquently the being of the Christian and summons him, in tones not less eloquent, to the conduct that lies upon him being the Christ he is. Indeed, many a page and passage unfolded here must surely

evoke recollections of the *Agnosce, O Christiane, dignitatem tuam* of the great St. Leo on the one hand, and memories of a pristine *Exhortatio ad martyres* on the other. Here, too, as one can hardly fail to perceive, there is bodied forth the true substance of the Christian's high estate, so nobly enshrined in the *Agnosce;* and here too, is ignited the ecstatic glow of his unbartered and unparceled allegiance, burning so intensely in the *Exhortatio.*

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Feast of the Annunciation, 1954

The Social Import of the Sacraments

"FOR ME," said St. Paul, "to live is Christ." [1] Indeed, God has "predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ as his sons." [2] We, on our part, are to live, love, suffer, and die in Christ. Through all the vicissitudes of this world, God is at work that we be "conformed to the image of his Son." [3] Christian holiness is identification with Christ.

The great means established by God to communicate to us this life in Christ are the sacraments. With good reason has Christian tradition always been pleased to consider them as channels of grace flowing copiously from the pierced side of Christ. Through the sacraments all the benefits of the redemption, acquired once for all on the Cross, are transmitted to us. They represent a new mode and order of being, transcending time and space, which God has created to perpetuate in our midst the reality of His redemptive sacrifice and the personal action of our Saviour in each of our lives, on each of our souls. Through the symbolic rites and ceremonies performed by the Church in the sacraments, the deeds of Christ are perpetuated. Thanks to the sacramental order, the Christ of history, circumscribed in space and time, is become the Christ of all nations and all ages. Jesus is still present among us. The Christ that was crucified on Golgotha calls unto Himself every generation. It is for us, then, to turn our existence into an ardent search of Christ. The span of life apportioned to us constitutes the personal hour of our personal redemption. Of the infinite fullness of Christ the Head's grace, each of us receives according to the measure of his personal fervor.[4]

Over and above the individual, however, it is the entire mystical body of Christ that is progressively built up from one century to another through the economy of the sacraments. Per-

haps this wider, this social, aspect of the Church's sacramental life has not always been sufficiently emphasized. Yet there is not a single sacrament that does not have, at least indirectly, its effects on the whole of Christ's mystical body. In our own day men everywhere are giving increased attention to social values. In all walks of life—in religion, in art, in culture as well as in economic matters—all questions are approached from a supranational point of view. To the Church this is not a new approach. The Church, the mystical body of Christ, is used to seeing all things in relation to the all-embracing plan of the redemption. It is easy, indeed it is natural, for her to place everything within the perspective, within the broadest possible perspective, of world-wide solidarity. All her teachings introduce social repercussions. But it is the theology of the sacraments in particular that brings us face to face with the most efficacious means for the growth and the solidarization of Christ's mystical body.

Thus, baptism is the sacrament of initiation into the Christian community, the official rite of incorporation into Christ and His Church. A Christian soul never stands alone before Christ. We have it on faith that God sent His Son to the whole human race to unite all men in one and the same mystical body. This social import of the graces of baptism and of the other sacraments is too much neglected in the individualism of modern piety. The greatest fruit of baptism is precisely the entrance it grants us into the Church, this achievement of Christ so full of mystery. Through baptism we are constituted both children of God and of the Church, and living members united with the whole mystical body of Christ. To the Christian, baptism brings God as father, the Church as mother, and all men as brothers in Christ Jesus.

Engaged in relentless struggle in fulfillment of the redemption, the Church needs apostles and soldiers. Confirmation creates these missionaries of the gospel and these official defenders of the Church of Christ. The sacramental character imprinted on the soul of these "perfect Christians" constitutes them

as newly recruited and commissioned soldiers of Christ, with the solemn obligation to bear witness, to proclaim their faith to the world, to spread and defend, at the cost of martyrdom if necessary, the common good of the Christian society. A soldier of Christ lives and dies for Christianity.

When, next, the Christian advancing in age begins to think of founding a family, the Church brings to his attention the meaning of Christian marriage, essentially ordained to the propagation of the mystical body of Christ, to the numerical increase of adorers of the Trinity. No need to insist on this classical teaching. The family is the basic cell of the Christian community, and indeed of every human society. Parents must live for their children. A father and a mother worthy of the name forget themselves. In a Christian environment conjugal love develops into friendship in Christ and is dedicated to the pedagogic mission of the family, the school of sanctity in which the members of the mystical body of Christ are trained and matured. For a woman, the best way to serve both God and country is to be a mother. The Christian home is the recruiting station for apostles of Christ, for priests and saints. Thus the family unit builds up the City of God.

The Eucharist, the sacrament of unity, effects the communion of the entire Church with the one Christ. The more men are united with Christ, the greater the accord among themselves. If the first Christians lived in such perfect brotherly love as to be "of one heart and one soul" [5] in the Lord, they succeeded in this only because with one mind they "continued steadfastly in prayer" [6] and partook together "of the breaking of the bread." [7] The first Christian communities gathered around the Eucharist, the source of their unity. Faced with internal division and external friction that so often results in modern nations clashing with one another in fratricidal wars, what power for understanding between peoples and for conciliation among nations the world would find if all men gathered round the same Eucharistic table of the one Christ, seeking there the source of their common

inspiration and mutual understanding as well as the pledge of harmony and peace!

Composed of sinful members, the Church militant works out its salvation in the midst of a thousand dangers, maintaining an existence that is not only precarious from the human point of view but also marked by frequent lapses and relapses. If our divine Saviour had not provided for the permanent establishment of a sacrament of mercy and pardon, the mystical body should quickly have succumbed to the forces of ruin and death. But penance is there to restore the life of Christ and the friendship of God to souls dead by sin. Here again, let it be noted, it is not only the isolated individual who receives the fruits of the sacrament of penance. In addition to the sinner who is converted and the just who with the help of priestly absolution advances to a higher degree of holiness, the whole mystical body of Christ profits from these graces of spiritual resurrection and sanctification. The most secret fruits of pardon brought to the sinful soul by this purifying sacrament accrue indirectly to the whole Church, which is cleansed of her daily faults in the blood of the Redeemer and thus, according to the wish of her Master, is made pure and holy, without spot or wrinkle, becoming more and more like unto the holiness of God.

In the Church, hardened and scandal-giving sinners are treated as contagious members against which the community must guard itself. In the manner of a living organism the Church struggles against every evil that threatens the entire social body, for nothing divides men like sin. By expelling sin, which is the internal principle of disintegration, the sacrament of penance removes from the Christian community the element of disorder and death, and thus serves as one of the strongest safeguards of unity.

Holy orders is the sacrament of hierarchical unity in the Church. In the Christian community the priest is the man of the common good, at the service of all. The lowliest priest is charged with the care of the whole Church; his mediation extends to the

entire mystical body of Christ. For in the performance of his sacred functions the priest always acts in the person of Christ and in the name of the whole Church. His office as official mediator, which places him between God and men, is not restricted to one parish, one diocese, one nation. His priesthood puts him at the service of all men, and in every priest it must be possible to find again the soul of Christ.

The power of the priest reaches its maximum efficacy at the Mass. In perpetuating on the altar the supreme act of Christ's priesthood that saved the world, the action of the priest reaches out to embrace the whole mystical body of Christ. The sacrifice of adoration and thanksgiving and expiation which he lays before the throne of God is invested with such amplitude as to render Him infinite praise and homage, while his suppliant prayer effects the application to mankind of all the merits of Christ. It is in the name of the entire mystical body and in behalf of all mankind that the priest at the altar raises up, as if to all the world, the consecrated Victim that wrought our redemption. The priest-mediator is another Christ on the Cross, binding all men to God again. Offering a Mass is a more sublime act than governing the whole Church. Nothing on earth equals the mediating power of the priest at the altar holding Christ in his hands and offering Him in sacrifice to the adorable Trinity. The Mass is the privileged moment when the power of the priest achieves its highest efficacy, and the supreme moment when the Church of the Word Incarnate gathers around her Christ, to be united in prayer and adoration before God.[8]

It is not only at the Mass but by his whole life that the priest is at the service of the Christian community. All the treasures of Christ's redemption pass through the hands of the priest. In our day a priest entrusted with the care of souls has to perform a variety of tasks relating to the priesthood and the kingdom of Christ. Sublime as his sacred functions are—and, in fact, they constitute the supreme value of his priesthood—something more is required to meet the needs of modern Christian living. The

modern priest must have the moral and intellectual qualities (that is, the soul) of a leader of men. It is his mission so to guide and direct men and women through the formidable complexities of daily life and temporal needs as to bring them to their eternal destiny. No life has a greater bearing than his on the spiritual well-being of mankind.

Man of God, the priest accordingly is the man of all men, above race and faction, bestowing his solicitous care not only on Christians but also on pagans and those who are indifferent, even on apostates and those who are excommunicated; in a word, upon all whose will is free and may be turned to God and converted to Christ. The abiding personification of the Word Incarnate and the "servant of Christ and steward of the mysteries of God," [9] the priest is another Christ assigned to the task of bringing all men back to God. In furtherance of this purpose, the Son of God has entrusted to His ministerial priesthood all His own powers as Priest and King. Every priest, according to his position in the Church, fulfills the work of Christ. The lowliest of priests is another Christ and mediator, with the task of promoting the spiritual common welfare of all mankind.

At the moment of extreme unction the whole Church is at prayer for the sick and the dying. It is a custom in the Church, one that is very dear to the faithful, to pray daily for the dying. Here again it is not merely the individual but the entire Christian community that is at prayer before God. "Is any one among you sick?" Mindful of St. James' exhortation, "let him bring in the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord . . . and if he be in sins, they will be forgiven him." [10] Enlightened by faith, the Church realizes the importance of this passing from one world to the other: that it is the critical moment in a human life, the decisive moment that will determine the destiny of a soul for all eternity. One by one her members rejoin those other members of the mystical body already established amid the splendors of God. Extreme unction puts the finishing touches to the bonds of unity

among the members of the Church militant; at that moment they stand at the threshold of the Church triumphant, awaiting entrance to the vision of God.

In the sacramental economy every action reflects and betokens an indissoluble solidarity among all the members of Christ's mystical body. God Himself views mankind from no other perspective than the framework of His redemptive plan; and Jesus looks at each of us only through the horizon of His Church, against the background of the City of God. Christ's watchfulness over His Church is seen in the sacramental world, which is a continuation of all the benefits of redemption wrought by the incarnation. Baptism supplies the Church with its members. Confirmation constitutes them its defenders. The Eucharist sustains them in their daily struggles. Penance restores them to full spiritual health should they have committed sin. Marriage increases the members of this immense social body, which grows by degrees as the centuries of human history unfold. The priesthood preserves order and unity in the Church on earth. Lastly, when the hour appointed for each of us to leave this world arrives, the Christ of one's baptism comes again to the Christian soul to prepare by one final anointing its entrance into the everlasting City of God. Far from being terminated with death, membership in the Christian community is made permanent in heaven: the Church militant is merged with the Church triumphant in the unity of the total Christ.

Notes to Introduction

[1] Phil. 1:21. (Scriptural references in this translation are quoted from the Douay Version for the Old Testament, and, for the New Testament, from the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine Edition [Paterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1941].—Translator's note.)

[2] Eph. 1:5.

[3] Rom. 8:29.

[4] On this point St. Thomas writes as follows: "Although Christ, by His death, atoned sufficiently for the sins of mankind . . . each one must seek the means of his own salvation. Christ's death is by way of being a universal cause of salvation, just as the sin of the first man was like a universal cause of damnation. Now a universal cause needs to be applied to each individual, that the latter may have his share in the effect of the universal cause. Accordingly, the effect of the sin of our first parent reaches each individual through carnal origin: and the effect of Christ's death reaches each individual through spiritual regeneration, whereby man is united to and incorporated with Christ. Therefore each man must seek to be regenerated by Christ, and to receive the other things in which the power of Christ's death is effective. Hence it follows that the outflow of salvation from Christ to mankind is not through the channel of natural procreation, but through the endeavour of the good-will whereby a man adheres to Christ" (*Summa contra Gentiles,* Bk.IV, ch.55; literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province).

Unless otherwise indicated, translations from St. Thomas' works are mine. Hereinafter, whenever the above-mentioned version is used, it will be identified as "Dom. Trans."—Translator's note.

[5] Acts 4:32.

[6] Acts 1:14.

[7] Acts 2:42.

[8] "The sacraments of the New Law are ordained for a twofold purpose; namely, for a remedy against sins; and for the perfecting of the soul in things pertaining to divine worship according to the rite of the Christian life" (*Summa Theologica,* I, 63, 1c; Dom. Trans. Reprinted from *The Summa of St. Thomas Aquinas* with the permission of Benziger Brothers, Inc., publishers and copyright owners).

In other words, the effects of the sacraments operate in a twofold direction: that is, they communicate to us both the *holiness* and the *priesthood* of Christ. In virtue of the baptismal character, the entire Church militant is endowed with priestly status, receiving the power to offer Christ to the Trinity as Priest and Victim.

[9] 1 Cor. 4:1.

[10] Jas. 5:14–15.

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THE SACRAMENTS IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

CHAPTER ONE

Baptism: Incorporation in Christ

SUMMARY: 1. Rebirth in Christ. . . . 2. The Why of Suffering. . . . 3. The Mystery of Grace. . . . 4. The Grace of Adoption. . . . 5. The Indwelling of the Blessed Trinity. . . . 6. The Soul: Living Temple of the Trinity. . . . 7. Our Calling in Christ. . . . 8. Christ-forming Grace. . . . 9. Members of Christ's Mystical Body. . . . 10. Our Calling unto Eternity. . . . 11. Every Christian Is Another Christ.

Baptism, the sacrament of incorporation in Christ, introduces us into the family of the Trinity.

BAPTISM is Christ's first redemptive action within us. The Son of God Himself brings to us, in the measure of our personal dispositions, all the graces merited by His incarnation and His death on the Cross. Rightly does the Church urge pastors and faithful alike to be deeply conscious of this initial grace that contains in germ their entire spiritual life in Christ. This first contact with the Saviour works marvels of grace in us:

a. It brings about the complete purification of the soul through the remission of all sin and all punishment, both temporal and eternal.

b. It bestows the grace of adoption, by which the soul is made the handmaid of the Trinity and permitted to share the inmost life of the three divine Persons.

c. It incorporates us in Christ, to be living members of His mystical body, in intimate communion with all the just of heaven and earth.

Briefly, through baptism the Christian becomes another Christ, called to live in His image, his sole concern the glorification of the Father unto the redemption of the world.

I. REBIRTH IN CHRIST

Baptism is before all else a rebirth. "Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." [1] Thus taught Jesus. Of water and the Spirit must a man be born again unto the life of grace.[2] This rebirth of souls in Christ is clearly symbolized in the ceremonies of baptism. According to the baptismal liturgy man is "immersed," "washed," "baptized," in the redeeming blood and death of Christ. He emerges from the waters wholly purified, reborn. With Christ he has died to sin, and with Him has risen to a life truly divine.

To understand how really and truly, through baptism, every Christian is a risen man, we need to appreciate the place this sacrament held within the framework of the primitive Easter liturgy, for this whole liturgy is baptismal in spirit and inspiration. Deeply sensible of the import of this ancient liturgy, the newly baptized of a distant past had little difficulty in realizing that on Easter day (or early morn) he had shared in the death and resurrection of the Saviour. This was a teaching that St. Paul delighted to bring to the attention of the first Christians: "For you were buried with him in baptism, and in him also rose again." [3] "Do you not know that all we who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death? For we were buried with him by means of baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ has arisen from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life." [4]

We cannot grasp the full meaning of this capital teaching regarding our salvation unless we remember that Christianity is a mystery of solidarity: a solidarity of evil through original sin, a solidarity of good by all men sharing in the merits of Christ. The first man, spiritual head of the human race, molded not only his own destiny but that of all his descendants as well. Faithful, he would not have known that moral and physical disharmony which was for him, and remains for us, the consequence of his original fault. He would have experienced neither the revolt of

sense, nor sickness, nor death. The passage from the paradise of earth to the paradise of heaven he would have made without suffering. As it is, his sons after him also have had to pay for their father's fault. Hence malice of will, ignorance of intellect, unruliness of sense, and infirmities of the flesh; hence, in a word, that long array of moral and physical maladies which are the daily diet of the human race and which only death will bring to an end.

In a well-known and dramatic passage addressed to the Romans,[5] a passage that breathes his all-consuming zeal for Christ, St. Paul describes on the one hand the universal ravages wrought by this fault of Adam, but in striking contrast he also portrays the not less universal and the infinitely superior power of the redemption wrought by the Word Incarnate. It is strictly necessary to adopt the point of view of our holy faith if we want to appreciate for its true worth the work of redemption and salvation effected in the soul of all sons of Adam through the sacrament of baptism. All of us were imperiled, and are now delivered. The immaculate Mother of God herself, far from being an exception to the law of universal ransom and redeeming pardon, stands as the masterwork of Christ's redemption.

St. Paul declares: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." [6] This cardinal teaching forms the basis of his apostolic preaching. It was God, he says, who brought us life: "You also, when you were dead by reason of your offenses and sins . . . were by nature children of wrath even as the rest. But God, who is rich in mercy, by reason of his very great love wherewith he has loved us even when we were dead by reason of our sins, brought us to life together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and seated us together in heaven in Christ Jesus, that he might show in the ages to come the overflowing riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not from yourselves, for it is the gift of God; not as the

outcome of works. . . . For his workmanship we are, created in Christ Jesus." [7]

All the great texts from the Pauline teaching on the gratuitous character of our justification in Christ could be applied to baptism, which is the moment par excellence of our personal justification. For what, in effect, takes place in baptism? The complete redemption is unfolded in the soul of the baptized to remove from it the blemish of original sin and also, in the case of the adult, all personal faults, great and small, that may have stained his soul. Baptism is the first application of that law of supernatural solidarity which binds to Christ all the members of His mystical body and makes them as much the beneficiaries of all His redemptive merits as if they themselves had acquired them. St. Thomas, in fact, does not hesitate to say boldly: "To each baptized person the Passion of Christ is imparted, as if he himself (the baptized) had suffered and died on the Cross." [8]

Every Christian, then, is one with Christ. In the economy of redemption it is as though each of us were the Word Incarnate, offering to the justice of the Father satisfaction and merits of infinite value. Man himself redeems himself in Christ, since the head and the members form but one living reality. Through the light of faith this teaching will be clearly understood by all who have grasped the mysterious unity that binds together the total Christ. They will understand why the Church attaches such great importance to this teaching regarding the unity of the mystical body in the economy of our salvation in Christ. Our whole supernatural life depends on this point. From God, Christ has received the grace of headship, of which all His members are to be the beneficiaries. It is the same life that pulses in the whole body. Head and members are but one mystical person. This statement goes further than is sometimes realized. In the order of satisfaction, of redemption, of merit, of prayer, of priesthood: in this over-all sphere all has been made common between Christ and us. Every deed of the Word Incarnate assumed a universal scope and import, shared in full right by the acts of all members

of His body, united as they are to His divine Person; for the whole Church, the mystical body of Christ, can be regarded as being but one person with Him.[9]

The Passion of Christ not only made amends for all the faults of mankind; it also resulted in freeing us from all temporal and eternal punishment due to sin. Christ offered up His life as Word Incarnate to His Father. His sacrifice, culminating in the tragic suffering and death on Calvary, was motivated by infinite love, a love that sought only the Father's glory. In thus offering Himself, He presented to God such atonement as was not only adequate to, but incomparably greater than, the offense contained in all the sins of mankind. This is a truth which St. John more than once pointed out, with customary simplicity, to the early Christians: "You know that he appeared to take our sins away, and sin is not in him." [10] "He is a propitiation for our sins, not for ours only but also for those of the whole world." [11]

Divine Justice had decreed to exact adequate satisfaction for the infinite offense committed against the majesty of God by Adam's disobedience and by the personal transgressions of his descendants. Moved by a love beyond compare, God the Son deigned to come in the flesh to expiate the wrong caused by sin, taking upon Himself "the iniquity of us all." [12] The eternal Word, coequal with the Father, the brightness of His glory and the image of His substance: the eternal Word became the Christ of Gethsemane and Golgotha, the "man of sorrows," [14] being like the leper struck by God, like the anvil under the strong and relentless hammer of the smith, the worm crushed under the chariot wheel. These Biblical images put in sharp relief the mournful aspect of the otherwise radiant and refulgent mystery of the Word, who made His abode among us to carry our sins in His flesh and place them on the wood of the Cross.

The effects of this heroic deed of atonement were truly stupendous. St. Paul has described them, and Catholic theology teaches by what manner, in baptism and the other sacraments, they are applied to every soul. Previously, men had lived estranged from

God. Now, through the blood of Christ, they are "reconciled" with Him. Jesus became the "bond of peace" between His Father and mankind, who are His brothers. Henceforth, "through him we . . . have access in one Spirit to the Father." [15] No longer are we children of God's wrath, but living members of His only Son, loved with the same love as He. The only-begotten Son has become the first-born among many brethren. The sons of Adam are again children of adoption, restored like prodigal children to their Father's house, where they find their patrimony not only intact but greatly enriched by the infinite treasures of the only-begotten Son of the Father, the Son superseding Adam as head of God's family. Truly, then, "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." [16] With good cause, therefore, does the Easter liturgy sing enthusiastically of that original fault which was to bring into the world, to be our brother and redeemer, God's Son Himself. *"O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere redemptorem*—O truly blessed fault, that could have so great and so grand a redeemer!"

2. THE WHY OF SUFFERING

Though baptism applies to us the infinite merits of the suffering and death of Christ, it does not restore all the privileges enjoyed in the state of innocence before the Fall. The reason is not that Christ's grace lacked the power to do so, for this grace is infinitely more powerful than the malice of Adam was great. To speak truly, God could have established a different plan of salvation: one in which the redemption of Christ should have met with no obstacles in the supernaturally reborn man, and one in which sanctifying grace and the pardon of sin should necessarily have been accompanied by all the privileges that marked the state of innocence.

If God had so willed, redeemed man could immediately have found himself in possession of the highest physical and moral integrity, with a perfectly controlled will attracted only by the

true good, with an understanding finding truth without effort, with his flesh perfectly subordinated to the spirit, and all his faculties working in harmony and complete submission to the soul and to God. His life would have been without sorrow and suffering and without the doom of death. After uninterrupted happiness on earth, he would have gained the vision of eternal peace in Christ, endowed, though not dying, with a glorified body and all its qualities in the company of the saints.

Such, however, was not the will of God. In His divine wisdom, which is infinitely more wise than human wisdom, God preferred to bestir us rather to a deep and poignant awareness of our vocation as members of a crucified Christ. Hence, our weakness in doing good is intended to throw into sharper relief the sublime power of Christ, a power that enables us to support a life that is divine by grace in a vessel that is fragile, in a body inclined to sin and evil. The root of inclination to evil persists, and this provides us with opportunity for striving and conquering. Furthermore, in Christ lies the clue to the mystery of suffering. The adequate explanation must be sought in the contemplation of Christ crucified; only in the light of His suffering can we find the real meaning of human suffering.

Thus, in the first place, according to God's plan suffering is to be *expiation* and *reparation*. It is the way for sinful man to atone for his faults and those of his brothers. Suffering is also to be *purification*. It weans us from the fleeting and hollow pleasures of sin. A soul lifted by suffering, like Christ on Golgotha, above the things of earth turns to heaven and away from all that is not God. Also, suffering is to be *meritorious* and *coredeeming*. That is why St. Paul could say: "What is lacking of the sufferings of Christ I fill up in my flesh for his body, which is the Church." [17] When a soul suffers out of pure and disinterested love without regard to itself, it is more useful to the Church militant and to the whole world than when it is engaged in a most brilliant and successful apostolate. Souls are saved by dying for them. It was not by His words, nor by His miracles, that

Jesus saved the world, but by giving His life. To add to this, suffering is also to be *sanctifying;* through it we become like unto Christ in the highest degree possible on earth. God produces saints by conforming souls more and more to Christ crucified. Lastly, suffering makes us more like unto God, more nearly *divine.* St. Paul, whose sufferings for Christ have been surpassed by very few men, if any, had this to say: "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come," [18] the glory that will be our reward in the vision of the Blessed Trinity. To allow oneself to be crucified by suffering with Christ is to grow in the likeness to God. Who are the saints that regret having suffered? Suffering passes; having suffered, never.

In taking human flesh, the Word made our miseries His own; thus they are no longer insuperable. In His hands they became new instruments of glory to His Father and to Himself. He lifted them up to the realm of the divine, thereby delivering us from them. Hence, we are no longer in bondage to our afflictions. Though burdened by weaknesses of the flesh, beset by physical and mental sufferings, and assailed by ever-recurring temptations, we emerge victorious. Feeble and sinful we remain, but we are strengthened by the firm belief and assurance that neither death nor life, neither men nor principalities nor demons, neither things present nor things to come nor any creature is able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. All things we overcome in Him who has loved us. And we are convinced that to those who live by His love all things work together in Christ so as to be to their best interests. Even our bodies, we wholeheartedly believe, shall be transformed unto the image of His glory on the Day of the Lord.

3. THE MYSTERY OF GRACE

The purification of the soul and the remission of all punishment due to sin constitute the negative aspect of baptism. This

aspect discloses only its partial and secondary effects. Consider, for example, the Immaculate Conception. It would be minimizing that incomparable privilege to regard it only as a preservation from original sin and from all stain of sin. This mystery consists most of all in something positive, in an immeasurable fullness of grace that ranks higher than the holiness of all the angels and saints enjoying the splendors of glory.

So it is in baptism. Above all we must learn to appreciate its positive effects: a human being made divine by grace, God taking up His abode within us, we becoming one with Christ and being given a divine calling, wherein we receive new powers of thought and love so as to share, more intimately each day, the very life of the most Blessed Trinity. At the moment when the water touches the child's head, the grace of baptism makes him a member of God's family. Christ comes to his soul to cleanse it, but also to give it the power to share in the divine nature, giving it access to the privileged company of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. It is tremendously important for our spiritual life to realize the full meaning of this divine status conferred in baptism, a status so exalted that the beatific vision itself will only be the normal result of its full development.

This grace of regeneration means a new birth; it means that the very nature of the triune God is in some manner and measure communicated to the human being. When Christian thought attempts to define this mystery of our elevation to divine life together with its consequences, it can but go back and repeat the classical pronouncement of the lowly fisherman of Tiberias whom Christ chose to be the foundation stone of His Church. Through Christ, declares St. Peter, God "has granted us the very great and precious promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature." [19] We need to examine more closely this formulation of the supernatural greatness in Christ which baptism imparts to our souls. The point is that to understand what grace is we must try to know what God is, for grace, above all else, is an elevation of our being to the realm of

the divine. Its first effect is to make the soul Godlike in being and action. This teaching is the fundamental principle of our life in God; it is the source of all that gives dynamic power and character to that life.

It will help us to grasp the full meaning of this teaching if we remember that the divine nature is entirely spiritual, admitting of no other operations than those of a life of pure intelligence and infinite will. In God there is only light and love and joy. "God is light," [20] "God is love," [21] repeats St. John over and over. The happiness of God is vast as the immensity of His being, as the sweep of His eternal thought and the depth of His infinite love. His beatitude includes both all contemplative happiness in beholding His own eternal beauty and the splendors of the universe, as well as all happiness of the practical order in governing the world. He possesses, in a higher manner and degree, all the happiness of earth: joy, power, honor, and glory; but with absolute purity and perfection and infinite holiness. His delight is in Himself, in His own blessed life, as well as in all creatures that have come forth from His hands. His riches are His own inexhaustible being, sufficient unto itself; His power is omnipotence; His intrinsic glory, Himself; His extrinsic glory, the awe and admiration of every creature.

However, His inmost happiness, His infinite bliss and felicity, lies hidden within the bosom of the Father, inherent in the begetting of a Son equal to Himself, to whom, in an eternally abiding instant, He communicates His own divine nature and attributes: all this without prejudice to the supreme and unique simplicity of His being, a simplicity comprising at once the infinite riches of all His innumerable perfections both in the order of being and doing, of holiness and happiness. To His Son He gives His all, excepting His Fatherhood, by which alone Father and Son are distinguished, retaining absolute identity of one and the same divine nature. The Son is like unto the Father, proceeding from Him by generation as His substantial understanding. He is His

thought, His "Word," His living image, the figure of His substance and the splendor of His glory.

Furthermore, in an act of love of which both Father and Son are the principle and which unites both in one and the same divine nature, the Son together with the Father produces another living Person, who is Their common Spirit and who with Them possesses the same uncreated nature, the same attributes of power, eternity, and holiness, who is the personified love between the Father and the Son, in whom the course of this interior operation of the Trinitarian life is completed within one immutable and indivisible unity. "For there are three that bear witness in heaven . . . and these three are one." [22] Such is the mystery of our God.

Now, what is the role of grace? Grace gives us admittance to this inmost blessed happiness of the Trinity. The most penetrating insights of theology are those that open up to us, as far as possible, this mystery of grace; for theology does afford us some explanation of the soul's elevation to the realm where it can partake of the very nature of the triune God, so as to share the same life of thought and love as the Word and the Holy Spirit.[23] It is sound theological doctrine that the most Blessed Trinity is the source and prototype par excellence of this mysterious life of grace. Through grace the very substance of our soul and all its faculties are assimilated, in a real sense, to the divine nature, to a point where our being bears a resemblance to God Himself. Man so raised moves in the orbit of the divine, his true measure beyond mere human compass. In this context one may even say that man becomes God—not absolutely, of course. This is not a rash statement; it is truth, the tremendous truth, declaring the sublime destiny to which man has been called by God in His infinite goodness. Jesus Himself came into the world to bring home to us this teaching of Sacred Scripture, reminding us in asking: "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said you are gods'?" [24]

Needless to say, we are not equal to God; we do not possess eternal subsistence like Him; but we are gods, so to speak, by

real participation in that which constitutes the mystery proper of the divine nature as it subsists in the unity of three divine Persons, abiding in "light inaccessible" [25] to every created mind, the light wherein dwells our God. This is not the God of philosophers and savants: pure act, distant and alone. This is the God of Christians, the God of the gospel: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the God of love, whose Son loved us unto death on the Cross; God the Father, who Himself sent us this Son as Saviour; God the Spirit of love, the life-giving and sanctifying principle of Christ's entire Church, the Spirit in whom, by faith and the sacraments of Jesus, we share in God's own life. This indeed is the first effect of the grace of baptism, namely, that it lifts up the soul to the realm of the divine nature, permitting it to live in the manner, as it were, of the Trinity. A soul thus made divine by grace will judge all things by no other light than that of the eternal Word of God. It will love both God and its fellow men by the same love, the love that dwells in the heart of God.

In this connection, let it be said that there is no reason for being disturbed if exteriorly the life of the baptized persons appears to be drab and uneventful. Actually, in the words of the Apostle Paul, "Our citizenship is in heaven," [26] with God. The true life of Christians is not on earth; faith transports us to a world invisible; our gaze is fixed on high. Our real concern is no longer with things visible and temporal—they come and are gone—but with invisible realities, which alone are eternal.[27] All things temporal and corruptible are soon at an end. But the soul made divine by grace is truly divine. It knows that it is incomparably superior to all the things of this world. Henceforth, only what is eternal and divine will be worthy of its own nature made divine by grace. It was his intuition of this elevating grace that wrung from the heart of St. Augustine the famous cry: "You have made us, O Lord, for You alone, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You."

Through the grace of baptism, then, the Christian is another god, walking this earth like another Christ. His heart and soul

are fixed on the Blessed and unchanging Trinity, in whom he is destined one day to possess eternal life in the light of glory. Well might we ask whether we give sufficient attention to these supernatural realities, implanted in us by the grace of baptism. Who would suspect that even the least thought engendered by faith belongs to the same order as the beatific vision, to the order of the divine and the Trinity, to the same order as a face-to-face manifestation of the Word to a man? How many ever remember that even the smallest act of supernatural charity associates us with the same expression of eternal love that unites the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit? The least bit of grace makes us immeasurably more precious than the whole world.[28] Heaven's own seraphim, were they not themselves similarly privileged, would envy the soul endowed with these divine qualities. More concretely, look at the tattered youngsters that may be seen jumbling in the streets of any large city. For the sake of comparison, put one of them on one side of the scale. If he is baptized and in the state of grace, it would take nothing less than all of Christ's blood, which was shed for him, yes, it would take the Son of God Himself to counterbalance that scale.

It is grace that admits the soul to the life of the Trinity, permitting it, in very truth, to share the hiddenmost activity of the Blessed Trinity. Faith and, especially, the light of glory are a participation in the life of the Word; and charity, in the life of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the Father imparts to us the grace of adoption, which constitutes our highest dignity, our sonship in God. In *The Spiritual Canticle* St. John of the Cross portrays the sublime character of such a life assimilated to the divine, particularly in a soul that has arrived at the transforming heights of mystical union, which is but the full flowering of the grace of baptism. He describes that union as being, in some sort, a sharing in the very act whereby the Father begets the Son, and in the act of consummate bliss which unites Them in indissoluble embrace and results in the issuing forth of Their mutual Love. We can understand, then, why the saints suffer real torment in their

hearts when they see so many souls that have received these inestimable gifts of God, yet do not live by them, and why, in effect, they are moved to cry out, indignantly: "O you who were created for such priceless treasures, how can you still stoop to beguilement in the trifles and mere nothings of earth!"

4. THE GRACE OF ADOPTION

In creating the spiritual and material universe and sending His Son into the world God's one design was to grant men to share in His own divine life. It was His purpose to see them safely through the strifes and struggles that beset the Church militant, guiding them along their journey toward the goal of everlasting peace in the Blessed Trinity, where each of the elect shall find happiness without end. St. Paul reveals to us this plan of God by which He predestined us to become "holy and without blemish in his sight in love . . . unto the praise of the glory of his grace." [29] And what was to be the result of this divine predilection? St. Paul again tells us; it was to become His adopted children: "He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ as his sons." [30]

Hence there is every reason indeed to exclaim: "Blessed be the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whom He has given us as the pledge of His great love and mercy." The Father is the source of all life both within the utmost dwelling of the Trinity and within the souls of men. The course of the divine life which pulses, so to speak, within the mystery of the Trinity has its beginning in the Father. But it does not stop there. There is also the marvel of His love for us, for the communication of divine life does not halt with the Son and the Holy Spirit. This divine nature which He gives whole and entire, with infinite prodigality, to the Son and which, in turn, Father and Son together communicate to the Holy Spirit, so that the Three make but one only God, this same divine nature the Father communicates by grace to the whole spirit world: to the souls of men and to angels. He

does not, of course, give them possession of it in the same manner as to the Son and the Holy Spirit—that is, with perfect equality and numerical identity with His unique nature. The Deity is indivisible and incommunicable; and every creature, even though made Godlike by grace, occupies a position infinitely removed from the Creator, irreducibly distinct from God. But grace and, still more, the light of glory truly cause us to be sons of God, so as to belong to the family of the Trinity. By the incarnation the course and movement of the Trinitarian life was bestowed on the human nature of the Son; by grace it is further imparted to the souls of the just.

By grace, then, the Father makes us His adoptive children. In a human family, adoption generally seeks to compensate for barrenness. God's fatherhood, however, is not barren; it possesses infinite fecundity in the begetting of a Son who is God. In Him, therefore, adoption denotes, not lack or need, but utter generosity and munificence. Thus, St. John writes: "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. . . . Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that, when he appears, we shall be like to him, for we shall see him just as he is." [51]

This is the constant burden of St. John both in his Epistles and in his Gospel. He who more than any other was granted such insight into the divine and eternal sonship of the Word, whose penetrating supernatural vision has been likened to the unflinching gaze of the eagle, is also the Evangelist of the Father's tender love for every soul called to live in intimacy with God. And when we read or listen to his words, written when he was the last survivor of the eyewitnesses of Jesus, we cannot but be moved by the soul-stirring emotion with which he addresses us: "I write of what . . . we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have handled: of the Word of Life. And the Life was made known and we have seen, and now testify and announce to you, the

Life Eternal which was with the Father, and has appeared to us . . . in order that you also may have fellowship with us, and that our fellowship may be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." [32] The whole Gospel of St. John can be summed up in this: the only-begotten Son of the Father became man so that man could again become a child of God. The Word was made flesh and dwelled among us. He came unto His own, but His own, engrossed in their own devices, did not receive Him. To those, however, who received Him—that is, who heeded His presence—to those born, not of flesh nor of blood, but of the will of God, to such He gave the marvelous power of becoming sons of God.[33] Indeed, "no one has at any time seen God. The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has revealed him." [34] He has made known His ineffable name of Father, and His immeasurable love for men, a love so great we are called His children.

The doctrine of adoptive sonship in God is the foundation of all Christian spirituality. It was for this that Christ took flesh and redeemed us. Accordingly, it is not surprising that this teaching is echoed in St. Paul: "When the fullness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." [35] We should therefore read again, in the light of faith, that unsurpassed passage in the Epistle to the Romans in which the Apostle points out that for those who are in Christ Jesus there is no longer any condemnation for their past sins, but that now we can, in all freedom, surrender ourselves to the "spirit of adoption as sons." In the words of St. Paul, "Whoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Now you have not received a spirit of bondage so as to be again in fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons, by virtue of which we cry, Abba! Father! The Spirit himself gives testimony to our spirit that we are sons of God. But if we are sons, we are heirs also: heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ." [36]

Doubtless, we still await the full revelation of this glory. Until then, every creature remains subject to vanity, groaning and bearing his burden, but hopeful of the final liberation that awaits the children of adoption, a condition that will be fully achieved only in the brightness of glory. Hope fills our hearts and, hoping, we are already saved. Furthermore, the Spirit of the Father is always at hand to support us in our weakness: "For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself pleads for us with unutterable groanings." [37] Also, we know that to those who are beloved of God all things work together unto good, that is, to those whom God foreknew and predestined one day to become conformed to the image of His Son, the first-born among many brethren.[38]

Thus we can begin to understand what a great change came about in our relationship with God by the coming of His Son and the inauguration of the gospel. We now have the assurance that life on earth together with its happenings is to be the means of our progressive conformation with the Father's only-begotten Son, in whom we are saved. Henceforth nothing must deflect us from the course to our eternal destiny. We may groan and travail while awaiting the splendors of glory and the perfect fulfillment of our adoption, but we treasure the hope that the body itself will share in the radiant brightness of the soul on the day when our calling to sonship in God, received in baptism, will be made manifest in all its truth and being. Only then shall we understand how much indeed God the Father has loved us, going so far as to cause us to be His sons of adoption after the image of His only-begotten Son. Hence, we can appreciate why St. John, with characteristic insight, should make of our divine adoption the cornerstone of his entire moral teaching. "Dear children," he writes, ". . . behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. . . . And everyone who has this hope in him makes himself holy, just as he also is holy." [39]

5. THE INDWELLING OF THE BLESSED TRINITY

The more we contemplate in the light of faith the great gifts of baptism, the more we are astounded by the munificence of God's bounty. Moreover, it would be a mistake to regard the effects of this initial grace as passing phenomena. The Trinity of baptism is with us all the days of our life. The Father is always present, providentially watching day and night over His adopted children. The Word is always present, keeping them from all evil. The Holy Spirit is always present, guiding them through the cares and hardships of this life, toward their eternal destiny. All three divine Persons of the Trinity unceasingly watch over us with their all-powerful protection.[40]

Here, in the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity, lies a truth that ought never to be overlooked. Perhaps we are too much accustomed to weighing only the personal efforts of the soul in the quest for perfection. Such personal effort is certainly necessary, but we should not forget the unceasing impulse and direction of the Holy Spirit, or the primordial and precursive action on the part of God. Jesus has said: "If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him." [41] It is clear, then, that not only the Word comes to the soul. How, as a matter of fact, could the Father and the Son be separated from Their Spirit of love? And if all the Trinity come to dwell in the Christian soul, it is not to abide inactive. "My Father," said Jesus, "works even until now, and I work." [42] This continuous action of the Trinity is what keeps the physical world from falling into nothingness, and it operates all the more in the supernatural world of souls. The course of divine life which proceeds from the Father to the Son and binds Them together in the Holy Spirit, is continued externally in those mysterious and invisible missions that transform souls to the image of the Trinity. All holiness is but allowing oneself to be made Godlike. It is God that leads to God.

Thus we can truly say that at every moment the Father is

sending His Son to souls. Father and Son come to the soul together, and with Them Their Spirit. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together bring the believing soul the gift of sharing in Their life that is eternal. The action of the three divine Persons in the soul is of a piece. With the exception of those operations that constitute the mystery proper of each Person's inner life, the action of the Blessed Trinity is indivisible. We can, of course, appropriate to the Father the power that causes us to be children of adoption; to the Word, all the graces of enlightenment vouchsafed to us; to the Spirit of love, every work of sanctification wrought in our souls. Actually, however, in their operations within us the three divine Persons cannot be disassociated. Like the incarnation of the Word, our sanctification is the common work of the Trinity.

But, alas, how few they are that give earnest thought to this mysterious and uninterrupted action of the Trinity in the soul! How few who realize that the movement of supernatural life that breathes in the angelic world of pure spirits and in souls that belong to Christ has its source in the Trinity Itself! Both the angels and the Church triumphant in heaven share in the life of the Trinity through having the beatific vision of the Word. But the Church on earth as well, albeit obscurely and by faith, shares in this same life, each of her members having received it in baptism, in the name of the Trinity.

Accordingly, the baptized soul undergoes a remarkable transformation. By the grace of adoption it is admitted to the company of the three divine Persons; now its highest and truest life is in Them. Having received supernatural status in baptism and become Godlike by grace, the soul now is entitled to take up its abode with God and its habitation with the Trinity. Through the help of the theological and cardinal virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it dwells secure in close and intimate fellowship with each of the divine Persons.

Only by faith, however, can we discern the supernatural horizon of the invisible world. With this divine assistance the soul can enjoy, whenever it desires, the contemplation of the

triune God, not as distant and inaccessible, but as intimately present by love, abiding in the soul day and night from the moment of baptism. Without the presence of the Trinity the Christian soul is alone and forsaken. Through grace, however, it has the consciousness of being inhabited by a Being who is Love and who, at every moment, grants it to share in His eternal life. Thus an intimate bond is fastened, a bond that is intended to become stronger as the days of this life go by; and nothing must come between the soul and God to retard the progressive strengthening of this bond.

As we have remarked, the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity give the soul an abiding presence in the Trinity. True, it is the obscure presence of faith, and of hope still longing; it is the presence that comes of love. Nevertheless, it is a real presence, being the anticipated possession of God, which can be likened to being in heaven while yet on earth; for heaven is God, and through faith and love God dwells most intimately in the soul. In addition, the theological virtues are strengthened and supported by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, particularly by the gift of wisdom. Thereby the soul experiences God's love in a manner that affords the happiness it seeks, imperfectly it is true, yet enough to yield incomparably more happiness than lies in all the joys of earth.

Having a role in this life of unbroken fellowship with God are also the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Without them the soul would run the risk of succumbing, in one way or another, to the allurements of false mysticism, which results in the greatest evils to the spiritual life. These virtues keep the soul in contact with the hard realities of life on earth; they are a constant reminder that the Christian is expected to wage a hard fight for the cause of Christ. Prudence, for example, brings order into the life of the Christian by keeping him mindful of his inescapable condition as man, but also of his higher calling as a child of God. In moments of hesitation, when bewildered by the complexities of human life, prudence enlight-

ened by the Spirit of counsel helps him to choose unerringly the path that will lead to God. Thus he may live his life, simple and commonplace as it may be in outward appearance, on a truly divine level.

Justice establishes proportional equality between man and his fellow men on the one hand and between man and God on the other. Moreover, having granted the soul the gift of piety and filial love, God is moved, as it were, to temper the rigor of His justice with the loving smile of His countenance. But the inviolate and inviolable motto of one baptized must always be: "God served first." He must have a deep sense of God's transcendent majesty and of the immense debt of gratitude he owes Him, a debt he cannot possibly repay in full. On the other hand, he also needs to be ever aware of being a child of God that knows it can count on Him and have recourse to Him in prayer without constraint—yes, even with a confidence that borders on boldness. In dealing with his fellow men the Christian will always keep in mind that he possesses the grace of adoption and that his doings with other men should be based on the highest brotherly love. For faith has made known to him that they are his brothers in Christ, called to live with Christ in the happiness of God Himself and in the company of the saints.

Furthermore, through the Christian virtue of fortitude the soul can avail itself of the very strength and fortitude that Christ manifested on the Cross, a strength that overcomes all fear even in face of death, a strength that no misfortune can undermine. By the help of this supernatural virtue even the most excruciating suffering only serves to bring the soul closer to God; for, being motivated by supernatural love, it will have such atoning and redeeming value as to redound to the untold glory of God and the salvation of the soul.

The Christian virtue of temperance also has a special function in the supernatural life of the soul. For Christian temperance is something more than merely human orderliness and restraint. Its norm of happiness is not the moderate mean as educed by reason,

and much less is it the inordinate indulgence that comes of unreason. The Christian appraises life and its values from an infinitely higher point of view; he judges all things in the light received from the Trinity and in the light of his status as a child of God in Christ. His temperance, therefore, will include something of the folly of the Cross. Basically, to practice Christian temperance means to become conformed to Christ crucified. The Christian, for example, keeps himself pure, even virgin, the better on earth to serve God who is Love, and the more gloriously hereafter to behold the beauty and majesty of the Trinity. "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." [43]

The function of the cardinal virtues, then, is to maintain perfect order in our lives as holy men and women of Christendom, keeping us steadfast at our daily occupations, be they ever so lowly, all the while we are privileged to share the highest mystic graces. But beyond this function of regulating our whole practical life the cardinal virtues are designed to direct us toward a yet higher goal, namely, toward the growth of that divine union in which the soul's intimate fellowship with the Trinity is made perfect. Of course, not all souls arrive at such heights of perfection on earth, although the grace of baptism invites all to mystic union with God. But there are many souls, fervent and faithful, who surrender themselves completely to the call of divine love. In return, God grants them while yet on earth the experience of truly divine happiness which not even the most excruciating sufferings of life can diminish. We have only to recall, for example, the mystic experiences of a St. Teresa of Avila, a St. John of the Cross, or, coming closer to our own time, of Elizabeth of the Trinity, who lived in almost uninterrupted communion with the three divine Persons dwelling in her soul as beloved Guests unceasingly adored. One of her prayers, in part, reads as follows:

"O my God, Trinity whom I adore! Help me to become utterly forgetful of self, that I may bury myself in Thee, as changeless and as calm as though my soul were already in eter-

nity. May nothing disturb my peace or draw me out of Thee, O my immutable Lord! but may I at every moment penetrate more deeply into the depths of Thy mystery!

"O my 'Three,' my All, my Beatitude, Infinite Solitude, Immensity wherein I lose myself! I yield myself to Thee as Thy prey. Bury Thyself in me that I may be buried in Thee, until I depart to contemplate in Thy Light the abyss of Thy greatness!" [44]

Not every one can lay claim to such an immediate and intimate experience of the presence of the Trinity in the soul. Nevertheless, these holy models are examples of the reality of the supernatural world in which we ought to live and move instead of being content with spiritual mediocrity. "Don't be a commonplace soul!" wrote Elizabeth of the Trinity to a friend. The snare of mediocrity is the danger with which every Christian soul has to reckon; it is a danger that dogs on the heels, as it were, of the practical necessity to struggle for a livelihood. Unless the Christian has the courage to make every effort to rise above the press of business and pleasure, he will become enslaved to the pursuit of material advantages. It requires earnest and unceasing effort to rise above the routine mediocrity of daily life and to live, instead, in continuous union with God, and great effort so to perform our habitual tasks as to make them yield treasures that are eternal and divine.

Baptism requires of us that we do just that, and gives us the grace we need. In virtue of the baptismal character, which is indelible, we are under obligation to strive with all our strength, as long as life endures, toward this high ideal. God Himself owes us, in justice, the grace of state that goes with our high dignity as His children. We know that He does not hold back, that in His mercy He grants these graces in superabundance. A soul that is not living up to its baptismal calling should at once amend its ways and not keep putting off its conversion. There is risk in delay, for "the time is short." [45]

St. Paul was keenly aware of these sublime realities that are

the hallmark of the Christian life, as we can see in the following passage to the Corinthians: "You are the temple of the living God, as God says, 'I will dwell and move among them, I will be their God and they shall be my people.' " [46] It is to this basic truth of Christian spirituality that he appeals when exhorting his Christians to keep themselves pure and holy in the sight of God: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys the temple of God, him will God destroy; for holy is the temple of God, and this temple you are." [47] The history of early Christianity shows how deeply this truth was engraved in the hearts of the martyrs. As an instance in point we can recall the magnificent gesture of Origen's father uncovering the bosom of his newly baptized son and kneeling down to adore the presence there of the Trinity.

6. THE SOUL: LIVING TEMPLE OF THE TRINITY

The Christian soul is a living temple of the Trinity. In this temple all powers of intellect, of will, and of sense must be blended into harmony, as it were, to sing a hymn of glory to the eternal God. Faith is the opening and dominant note of this hymn. Faith reveals to the soul the sovereign majesty of God who is present in it. Besides this, the gifts of the Holy Spirit unfold His ineffable beauty. Thus, the presence of the divine Persons brings to the soul new understanding, new love, and unbounded joy. For what indeed are creatures, compared to the Persons of the Trinity? The gift of knowledge causes the soul to understand that they are vanity and nothingness.

To be sure, the mystery of the Trinity is unfathomable; Its infinite perfections, as such, are inaccessible to all human comprehension. Even with the gift of understanding, who would pretend to probe the depth of such mystery? The highest knowledge of God we can have on earth, is it not merely a glimpse, telling us not so much what He is as what He is not? Nevertheless, aided by the gift of wisdom, love finds in this hidden God a

reality that lies beyond all powers of understanding; and in this ignorance that is highest knowledge the soul abandons itself to the rapturous experience of the mystery of God. Rising above itself, the soul enters upon the hiddenmost secrets of divine union to enjoy, in the company of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the very happiness of the Trinity.

As for the lower powers of the soul, they also contribute to its hymn of glory to God. The virtue of prudence establishes unity and harmony among the various faculties. Justice elicits adoration, prayer, thanksgiving, and, if need be, atonement. Fortitude sustains this interior canticle of the soul, so that nothing causes its powers to turn from the thought of God. Temperance, thwarting every alien enticement, keeps the soul pure in its being and recollected in love. Thus all powers of the soul give testimony to the living God, present in it. The Holy Spirit Himself comes to inspire this hymn of unceasing praise, lending it a harmony made divine by the touch of God. Such is the sublime office of the Christian soul, once it is the living temple of the Trinity.

There is one created being in whom all powers of the soul sang praise to God in perfect unison and harmony. She is Mary, the immaculate Virgin, more pure than Adam and Eve in the state of innocence. Because of the simpleness of her life she is the nearest model for such as we, poor and lowly, who have been redeemed. In her there was never even the least disturbance of sin, but absolute virginal purity and a strength of soul that was not even then overcome as she stood at the foot of the Cross. She was ever attentive to serving God. She is the Virgin of adoration and atonement, whom God Himself arrayed to be the Virgin all-powerful in prayer and the Virgin of the Magnificat; whom He also chose as intimate associate to His divine counsels, so that to the unceasing hymn of divine praise pouring from the soul of Mary the Coredemptress were added the tragic overtones of the redemption. In her virginal soul all is brightness and highest understanding; in her hands she holds the destiny of nations; and from her womanly heart she offers to the triune

God of the incomprehensible Trinity the love of one who in Christ is the Mother of all nations.

In Mary the Spirit of God found a soul of perfect docility. She is the Mother of the Word, sharing with the Father the begetting of uncreated Wisdom.* God predestined her to be, through intimate cooperation with this same Spirit of love, the Mediatress of all graces. It is therefore impossible that she herself should not have possessed, in pre-eminent measure, any and all graces granted to all other saints. She lived in the Trinity under the ever-present and combined impulse, strength, and enlightenment of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. She is, in fact, the Holy Spirit's masterpiece, being second only to Christ. In Him were united in perfect harmony both all created and, through the Word, all uncreated perfections. But after Him there is none to give more glory to God. Such is the Virgin most faithful, perfect temple of the Blessed Trinity.

7. OUR CALLING IN CHRIST

The Trinitarian life in the soul comes through Christ, the one Mediator between God and men. In the actual plan of redemption all grace from the Father comes through Jesus. Our redemption by blood is from the Father's well-beloved Son, and from Him alone. It is in Jesus Christ that God "predestined us to be adopted . . . as his sons." [48] By Him we were granted, in baptism, the remission of our sins in view of the merits of His grace. This is according to God's eternal plan, by which He willed "to re-establish all things in Christ." [49] Consequently, the most Blessed Trinity as a whole must be considered the primordial source of the divine life in the soul, the principal cause of the Godlike resemblance produced in the soul to make it the living image of this same Trinity. Only God can cause us to be like

* Mary, to be sure, did not conceive the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, but she did conceive and give birth to Christ, in whom resides not only the fullness of grace but also, in hypostatic union, the uncreated Wisdom of the Father.—Translator's note.

unto Himself. "It is God who justifies." [50] In His goodness, however, He has deigned to make use of intermediaries. These are the sacraments and the ministers of the Church.

In the plan of redemption a very special role has been assigned to the human nature of Christ, the instrument par excellence of the divine Persons. Christ has a twofold claim to act as mediator in sanctifying souls. First, as the Word, that is, as the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, His action equals in power that of the Father. From the Word the Holy Spirit receives, so to speak, not only His uncreated nature but also all His power to sanctify the Church. Secondly, as man, Christ is the privileged instrument whereby God communicates to each of us His divine mercy. The personal grace that belongs to Him as the Word made flesh becomes the grace of headship and the source of life for His entire mystical body. Thus, the life of God comes to us only through Jesus, and the human nature of our Saviour is the channel through which this divine life flows to all the redeemed.

Let it be repeated: the Trinity does nothing in the soul without Christ. Therefore, in choosing Christ's human nature as the universal instrument of His redemption, God did not intend it to remain inoperative, but marvelously adapted it to the work of sanctifying souls. Hence, the human nature of our Redeemer possesses an excellence that is without compare, resulting from the divine Person in whom it subsists as an instrument of the Word. Indeed, the Word took such complete possession of this nature as to make it His own, endowing it with all the privileges of knowledge, grace, and power necessary to carry out the purposes of the incarnation and the redemption, to be the abiding instrument of His particular action on each and every soul.

Furthermore, the mediation of Christ is never dormant, but always actual and operative. For if, as is true, in the soul of Christ the Saviour something so transitory as the activities of a human existence assumed an infinite value, how much truer is it that in its risen and glorified state this same human nature should retain its redeeming power over us. And if in the hands

of God such purely material elements as the waters of baptism can become channels by which are conferred grace and the power of supernatural life, all the more does the human nature of Christ, substantially united to the Word of God, have the power through its redeeming contact to make souls divine by grace.

Despite its excellence, however, the human nature of Christ would have no effect on the soul if it lacked the means to establish real union with each of us. These means are the sacraments; and the first of them, baptism, aims chiefly at bringing about the first contact with the Saviour. For it should be borne in mind that it is Christ Himself who baptizes and is present to confer upon us the life of the Trinity. Our faith should cause us to see beyond the visible minister to Christ invisibly acting within us. At the moment, therefore, when from on high Christ approaches the soul to baptize it, God the Father communicates to the human nature of the Saviour a power it does not have of itself, the power, namely, to share with the Father in the action whereby the soul is assimilated to God by grace. Only through Christ does God make us Godlike.

This first contact of the soul with Christ leaves its impress on our entire spiritual life, shaping all its course and conduct. Here, again, is a truth that is of the utmost importance for the supernatural life. For God does not choose His instruments haphazardly, but always with a particular end in view. In choosing the human nature of Jesus Christ as the instrument of the Trinity it was God's design to conform us to Christ. He makes us His adoptive sons, but after "the image of his Son." [51] Christ became man so that man could become Christ. It should not be difficult to see that this truth will have almost incalculable consequences in the economy of our elevation to the supernatural order. Our spiritual life is a divine life in Christ.

Following St. Paul, exegetes and theologians have always stressed this character of inseparableness from Christ which marks not only the life but also the death and, hereafter, the heavenly glory of the Christian. To be baptized is to die with

Christ to sin. It is to be buried with Him in order to rise again to life in God through this same Christ that dies now no more, and to be seated with Him in the highest heaven. The Christian is born again in Christ; lives, suffers, and dies in Christ. In the words of St. Paul, to be baptized is to "put on Christ." [52] So true is this that with Christ he is "nailed to the cross." [53] His thoughts are the thoughts of Christ, and for him to die is, again in the magnificent phrase of St. Paul, to "fall asleep in Christ." [54]

More concisely, the perfect Christian ideal is summed up in this justly celebrated expression of the Apostle: "To me, to live is Christ." [55] Ever since they were uttered, Doctors and saints of the Church have tried to outdo one another in repeating and bringing home the significance of these words. For, truly, there is no going beyond them; better than any other they express the mystery of our oneness with Christ.

8. CHRIST-FORMING GRACE

Our faith speaks to us in terms that are forthright and realistic; so much so that one almost hesitates to add anything by way of theological explanation and elucidation. Still, in speaking of the Christ-forming grace which is the proper grace of the Christian, it is legitimate to ask what this adds to the grace of God. Or—and this comes to the same thing—in what respects does the grace of Christ differ from the grace of the Trinity, and in what respects is it the same, or similar? Using the terminology that is traditional in Christian mystical theology, one may say that the grace of baptism, like that of any sacrament, is essentially "Christ-forming," as compared with the grace of the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which is described as "deiform" or "God-forming," assimilating us, more properly, to God. Christ-forming grace, then, is the grace that conforms us to Christ.

Baptism is a good example. In baptism everything assumes a specifically Christian significance; the grace received is specifically Christian, producing specifically Christian, that is, Christ-

like effects. Thus, baptism justifies the sinner, but only through a special participation in the grace of headship of the Word Incarnate, a participation that is real, yes, "physical," causing the sinner to be a member of Christ. Baptized, he becomes "a new creature" [56] in Christ, another Christ. This new Christ is to think, pray, merit, atone, and die in the manner of the Word Incarnate. This second birth, which is in Christ, heals the moral and physical disorder inherited through our first (that is, carnal) birth; it invests us with a new mode of being, permitting us to enter into a new order of things.

Accordingly, the baptized becomes one with Christ. Hence the incomparable superiority of specifically Christian grace over other grace, inasmuch as the former grants us a participation in the infinite fullness of grace residing in the Word Incarnate. Consequently, we are more than sons of Adam who have been assimilated to God by grace; we are the living members of the Son of God. By as much as the Word Incarnate, the only-begotten Son of the Father, surpasses in excellence the first Adam, and by as much as the second Eve through her divine motherhood excels the first Eve, by so much does our dignity as children of God in Christ exceed the dignity that is common to all sons of Adam. Christ is the universal, the all-embracing cause of our sanctification: the exemplary cause, the cause that made satisfaction for our sins, the meritorious, the efficient, and the final cause. In all of these several ways Christ bestows upon us the power to share in His infinite grandeur and in His divine sonship, which is the pattern for our own. The Christian is another Christ.

In conforming us to Christ, however, baptism also requires that we live as Christ. Through baptism our whole supernatural destiny is covenanted in and with Christ; our life and His are inseparable. Whatever the Word Incarnate achieved in the order of satisfaction, of prayer, or priesthood, we are expected to realize in ourselves by living in uninterrupted communion with Him, for the total Christ is not fulfilled until He is fulfilled in us. Each of our actions will grow and prosper and bear fruit only if it is

rooted in Christ—which is to say, the members will have life only when united to their head. Christ is the soul of our soul, the author of all our supernatural activity.

Baptism, which implants the faith, causes us to view God and the world through the eyes of Jesus, and to appraise all things by the light of Christ. In fact, all the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity are heightened and made perfect in Christ. Faith becomes a participation in the beatific brightness and glory which the soul of the Word Incarnate enjoys. Hope moves us to seek and attain the joy of God which Christ already holds in pledge of our future glory. The love of Christ, which now impels us, causes us to love the Father in the way His Son does. And Christ's brotherly love of us fills our hearts with the same love and compassion He had for all men.

The cardinal virtues also receive new meaning. Prudence for us will mean the application of the philosophy of the Cross to life's daily round of care and toil. The true Christian organizes his life under the inspiration of Calvary. He regards his personal sufferings as a participation in the sufferings of Christ, a being conformed to Christ crucified. His virtue of piety and religion finds in the priestly soul of Christ the continual source of his own acts of prayer and filial worship. Moreover, by constituting us members of Christ's priesthood, the baptismal character empowers us to join in the act of perpetual oblation in Christ the Priest, who lives forever in the presence of the Father to offer Him praise and glory and to make intercession for us. Also, we share in the unconquerable strength and fortitude of Christ. Through us, the members of His Church militant, Christ is in agony until the end of time, still sustaining struggle and onslaught. Through it all, the holiness of Christ keeps us unharmed from every evil. Quite properly, therefore, has St. Paul said that to live baptized is to walk in Christ.[57] In him we have our supernatural being and living and doing. We have indeed become gods by grace, but to the manner and image of Christ.

9. MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S MYSTICAL BODY

The baptized soul does not stand alone before Christ. God sent His Son to the whole human race, to reunite all men in Him. From God, also, St. Paul received a very special grace to search and penetrate this all-inclusive aspect of the mystery of Christ; and in almost every one of his Epistles he comes back again and again to this new mystery by which all nations are members of Christ's body. Thus he writes: "By revelation was made known to me the mystery . . . which in other ages was not known to the sons of men, as now it has been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; namely, that the Gentiles are joint heirs, and fellow-members of the same body, and joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." [58] And again: "One body and one Spirit, even as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism; one God and Father of all." [59]

From on high Jesus Christ guides the destiny of His Church among the nations and bestows upon His whole mystical body the graces it needs. To each one grace is given according to the manner and measure of Christ's bestowal: to some to be apostles, to others to be prophets, or evangelists. He decides Himself who are to be rulers and teachers under Him, all for one only purpose: "to perfect the saints for a work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the deep knowledge of the Son of God, to perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ . . . to practice the truth in love, and so grow up in all things in him who is the head, Christ. . . . For from him the whole body . . . derives its increase to the building up of itself in love." [60]

This is the great supernatural mystery of a new world: one only Christ. A new race is born "through the bath of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit" [61] of Jesus. Christians have received a second life. For them, the creative hands of the Word are also redeeming hands; a new human race has been established, this time not in Adam, but in the Word; a race that is as

but one man, to be made whole and perfect in Christ. All are one with a unity that resides in the head and reaches to all members. Jesus and the Church are not two Christs, but one. If we want to grasp Christian thought in its profoundest sense, we must never separate Jesus from the members of His body.

It is absolutely essential that we have done with thinking of Christ as alone, as existing apart; instead, we must learn, and never forget, to think of Him as always united with His members. This was a point St. Augustine understood so well and insisted on so much: never to disjoin the total Christ. A body without a head would be a mutilation. "You are the body of Christ, member for member." [62] We are not just Christians, we are Christ, the total Christ. St. Paul never failed to emphasize, "All the members of the body, many as they are, form one body; so also is it with Christ." [63] Indeed, God could not have bestowed a greater gift upon the human race than to send them His Son as their spiritual head and to bring all men together again in Him, as members in their head. God and man are reconciled once and for all in Christ, who is both the Son of God and the Son of man, one with His Father and one with us. Henceforth, when appearing before God, we no longer stand unattached and dissociated from His Son. When Christ prays to His Father, we pray with Him and in Him. As priest, He prays for us. As head, He prays with us and in us. As God, we pray to Him. In the eyes of God the whole Church, through all the centuries, constitutes but one, abiding, suppliant body, immense and perpetual. We "are all one in Christ Jesus," [64] and it is baptism that establishes this unity among us. The same divine life pulsates in the head and the members. Between Jesus and His members all is one. The mystery of Christ is not complete until it is completed in us.

If only we realized, all of us, how important it is to lift our spiritual focus above the narrow and limited horizon of our individual existence, and how much we need to become aware again of that vast solidarity that unites us with all members, past, present, and to come, of Christ's one mystical body! Every Chris-

tian is united to and corporate with all the world, with all men of all times. The dogma of the communion of saints unites us with all the living members of the Word Incarnate and, through Him, with the Father. The more we enter into this divine unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the more Christian we are. God's designs are implemented on a social and corporate scale. Our personal destiny, therefore, is accomplished within world-wide and eternal dimensions, which neither time nor space can circumscribe.

Viewed from this lofty height of the total Christ, our Christian calling is seen to relate us to great multitudes of brothers, whose own destiny is involved in ours. The true Christian, that is, one who has come to live by this mystery of solidarity, can no longer pray or suffer or act for himself alone. When he prays to our common Father in heaven, he prays in the name of all. His suffering has redeeming value for the whole mystical body. His individual action helps to increase the treasury of merits of the saints. In a word, a soul that mounts the heights carries with it the world, even to the summit of God. Reciprocally, if all members are but one body, every baptized person has access to all the spiritual benefits of the Church. According to St. Thomas, "He that lives in charity shares in every good that is produced in the whole world." [65] The merits of Christ, of the Blessed Virgin, and of all the saints make up a common treasury accessible to all redeemed. Thus St. Paul writes: "He who has not spared even his own Son but has delivered him for us all, how can he fail to grant us also all things with him?" [66]

Baptism, which obtains for us an abundance of personal benefits, also admits us into the Church, the mysterious fulfillment of Christ. It is the same baptism that makes us both children of God and children of the Church. He, therefore, who will not have the Church as mother, cannot have God as father; for Christ communicates Himself to the soul through the Church alone. Through her the Spirit of Christ comes to each Christian, giving life to the members of the one mystical body and preserving the

unity of that body. The fullness of this Spirit resides in the head, the sharing of it in the members. The one and holy Church, which is the mysterious complement of Christ, lives, everywhere, by the one Spirit of the Father and the Son. There are diversities of grace and of function and of charismatic gifts, but the total Christ lives and breathes by one and the same Spirit.

In general, it is with the mystical body of Christ as with the natural body of man. As the eyes see for all the body and the tongue speaks for all the members and the head directs the whole organism, so in the mystical body of Christ, doctors and teachers seek the truth for the enlightenment of all, apostles bring Catholicity to all lands, bishops have the role of shepherds under the direction of the Sovereign Pontiff; he is the ruler of all, but in fealty to Christ invisible, who pledged to him the unfailing assistance of the Spirit that proceeds from the Father and the Son in the inmost being of the Blessed Trinity. Hence, one God, one Church, one Christ, one life—namely, that of the Trinity—coursing through the whole Christ. We must, accordingly, see the Church in all her universal sweep and scope; that is, we must see her as born amid the splendors of the Trinity, endowed with a universalness that embraces all men and the whole angelic world of pure spirits, united all in the total Christ.

10. OUR CALLING UNTO ETERNITY

Though the splendors of grace we receive in baptism are as nothing compared to the glory to come, they are not destined to disappear when we shall see God face to face. On the contrary, for the children of God the state of glory, in which even the earth and the heavens made new will participate, is but the final culmination, the full flowering, of the grace of baptism. Theology has provided a phrase that is both beautiful and profound to express this germinal character of the life of grace; theology refers to it as the "beginning of eternal life."

Yes, our baptismal calling is a calling unto eternity. The sacra-

ment of Christian initiation wants fulfillment. The life of the baptized on earth is indeed a spiritual life, but always developing, never reaching its final fruition. Grace wants the light of glory, faith wants vision, hope longs for the possession of God, and perfect love clamors for everlasting intimacy. Every one of the Christian virtues, as it were, feels itself exiled on earth and aspires to the fullness of growth and expression that awaits it in the brightness of the beatific vision. To be sure, the grace of baptism makes us gods, other Christs, but what a far cry it is from the Blessed Trinity to creatures such as we who, though made Godlike by grace, still walk this valley of tears; or from the Father's only-begotten Son, whose bright glory irradiates the risen body as well as the soul of Christ, to the great multitude of His brothers still toiling and suffering on earth! Grace is but the seed of glory, and each event in our life ought to be utilized to further the growth of that perfect likeness to Christ which is our goal. The dark glimpses of faith are far from being the bright vision that will be ours in glory when we shall behold all things by the light and wisdom of the Word. Doubtless, the normal and eventual result of baptism is to see and behold, like the Father, all things in the Son, in Him who is His eternal thought. But all this has yet to come.

It is true that in creatures we can dimly trace the hand of God. But they also hide from us the splendor of His countenance. And even should the Spirit of God favor us with the grace of those special illuminations beyond which it is impossible to go in this life, we should still be incapable of seeing the mystery of God and His works in all their reality. The great gifts of the intellect, such as the gift of knowledge, of understanding, and of wisdom, far from satisfying the soul's desire, only increase it; for these gifts intensify rather than diminish our sense of privation in regard to the glorious hereafter. The higher the gifts of the Holy Spirit transport the soul, the more they increase its longing to see the beauty and perfection of God face to face. Thus the gift of wisdom engenders the deepest feeling of exile on earth, where the

immediate and intuitive possession of the Trinity cannot be had. Though it remains true to say that life eternal is given us in baptism, we need not be told it is only the seed of that life, only the beginning. Of this, the virtue of hope is our keenest reminder, for hope exists only because we do not yet hold in embrace the God that is our supreme happiness.

In this respect, the lives of the saints are not exceptions. Though we do read of the spiritual joys with which they were sometimes favored, joys that seemed like anticipations of heaven, it is well to remember the words of St. Paul. More than any other perhaps, he experienced on earth something of the joys of heaven; yet he notifies us that "eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love him." [67] The truth is that even the purest and highest love of God can never find repose until it rest in God in heaven. Though it is possible to love someone absent, and to love disinterestedly, perfect love wants a "living together"; and when it is God we love, we want an eternity of love. Accordingly, by its very excellence, divine love more than any other virtue causes us to feel as strangers and exiles on earth. To live by faith, as now we must, puts our love under constraint, as if held back against its wishes. The soul, in other words, yearns for the loving touch of the one Being in whom it could find perfect happiness but whom it cannot yet enfold.

Moreover, in living its life on earth the soul, to repeat, also needs the support of the cardinal virtues. These, as we have seen, must guide it through the welter and conflict of human affairs. It would indeed prefer to live in continuous adoration of God, in unceasing prayer and thanksgiving for all His blessings, but the hard realities of life cannot be ignored. One after another the needs of daily living encroach on its preferred task of communion with God. And even should nothing intrude to divert its attention from things divine, God as possessed in the prayer of contemplation or thanksgiving still remains essentially inaccessible. The soul sees Him not. Instead, it must live among men, hard and incon-

siderate men it may be, who make it necessary to struggle for a livelihood, yet with whom it must seek to deal justly.

It may be that by reason of ties of blood or common intellectual interests the soul will love some more than others; but these, too, are at best companions for a day, faces that are here today and gone tomorrow. Thus, everything in life constantly reminds the soul that life is short, fearfully short. Its very status as a child of God is always at the mercy of a thousand and one uncertainties through which prudence must direct it. Prudence, also, must teach it how to live unfailingly by love, so that the life that passes may yield the life that is eternal. And temperance must instruct it how to use creatures as though not using them, for "the time is short . . . this world as we see it is passing away." [68] Lastly, fortitude must beget in the soul the courage to view unafraid the impermanence of human life and to stand up bravely to the fact and face of death, which is fortitude's highest act and triumph.

The Christian, then, is "exiled from the Lord." [69] In the Creed which he professes, he acknowledges his status as a traveler on his journey to eternity. "*Et exspecto vitam venturi saeculi*—I look for the life of the world to come." Such is his avowal. The Church militant lives in expectation of the City of God. We have here no lasting abode, but we seek for the habitation that is to come. St. Paul has left us an unforgettable description of the Christian living in exile on earth. "For we know," he writes, "that if the earthly house in which we dwell be destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made by human hands, eternal in the heavens. And indeed, in this present state we groan, yearning to be clothed over with that dwelling of ours which is from heaven; if indeed we shall be found clothed, and not naked. For we who are in this tent sigh under our burden, because we do not wish to be unclothed, but rather clothed over, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now he who made us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit of his pledge.

"Always full of courage, then, and knowing that while we are in the body we are exiled from the Lord—for we walk by faith

and not by sight—we even have the courage to prefer to be exiled from the body and to be at home with the Lord. And therefore we strive, whether in the body or out of it, to be pleasing to him." [70] Our home, our native land, is in heaven where Christ awaits us. He "will refashion the body of our lowliness, conforming it to the body of his glory." [71]

St. Peter speaks the same language. Having taught his Christians that by grace they have "become partakers of the divine nature" [72] and therefore ought to live on earth "as strangers and pilgrims," [73] he proceeds to point out, in the following remarkable passage, the practical consequences of their divine calling: "Beloved, do not be ignorant of this one thing, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord does not delay in his promises, but for your sake is long-suffering, not wishing that any should perish but that all should turn to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; at that time the heavens will pass away with great violence, and the elements will be dissolved with heat, and the earth, and the works that are in it, will be burned up. Seeing therefore that all these things are to be dissolved, what manner of men ought you to be in holy and pious behavior, you who await and hasten towards the coming of the day of God, by which the heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved and the elements will melt away by reason of the heat of the fire! But we look for new heavens and a new earth, according to his promises, wherein dwells justice. Therefore, beloved, while you look for these things, endeavor to be found by him without spot and blameless, in peace." [74]

Early Christian thought laid much emphasis on this sure return of the Lord. In a magnificent passage, revealing the breadth and depth of his supernal vision, St. Paul describes all creation as groaning in pain, impatient to enter upon the state of glory with the children of God. Such is the Christian view of the world. Faith puts us on the road to the land of vision, earth becomes a preparation for heaven, the Church militant aspires to blossom

forth into the City of God. In a word, to live as a Christian is to live awaiting the life-to-be in the Trinity.

The unity of the total Christ, however, will not be completed until the mystical body of Christ shall have been reunited, whole and entire, with its head. Then, all who died in Adam will rise in Christ, each in the state of glory appointed to him. Christ, the first to rise, has set the pattern. At the end of time He will be followed in the resurrection by the saints who believed in His coming and conformed their lives to His precept and example. In that hour of triumph Christ will receive once and for all the fullness of His body, the completion of Himself, namely, His Church. He will be conqueror over death and over all the forces of evil. Christ shall reign, for it needs must be that He reign and His enemies be put under His feet. God has placed all things under His rule. He has received all power on earth, in heaven, and under the earth. The greatest victory of all will be over death itself. Thereupon, in an act of supreme homage, Christ will offer His kingdom to His Father. Then will be the end, and God shall be all in all. The City of Earth will cease, merging with the eternal City of God.

II. EVERY CHRISTIAN IS ANOTHER CHRIST

These words contain the whole nature and meaning of our spiritual life inaugurated by the incarnation of the Son of God. As remarked earlier, for the Christian the practice of virtue is more than just living according to right reason, following moral precepts that are based on human nature as their highest source. This was the virtue of the pagans. Christian holiness is a divine life in Christ. Today, this difference in outlook and inspiration is not always appreciated as it should be. Many modern souls, Christian souls included, are too self-centered. What they need is a better understanding of spirituality in Christ. This requires them to replace their egocentrism, which is barren, with Christocentrism, which is fruitful and redeeming.

It cannot be repeated too often that God's coming among men has changed man's relationship with God. Jesus is now the source and the pattern of our holiness. Christian spirituality and mysticism consist in making souls perfect in the unity of the Trinity, through and in Jesus Christ. The real beginnings of our spiritual life date from the incarnation, for the grace by which Christ is the Son of God is also the grace by which we are Christian children of God. Hence, only by knowing what Christ is will we know what a Christian is. Our divine calling cannot be appreciated for all its worth and excellence unless it is seen as included in the plan of predestination according to which the Word took flesh and we became members of Christ's body. From this point of view our life of grace in Christ emerges as a continuation of the incarnation. Nothing suggests better its essential nature, its special qualities, and its supernatural character than so to understand it. St. Augustine reveals his great insight into the meaning of our life in Christ when he says that God became man so man could become God. The Word was made flesh to make other Christs of us. The incarnation planted the seeds of a new race. In brief, baptism means oneness with Christ; everything follows from that.

Accordingly, three fundamental attitudes mark Christian spirituality:

1) It regards asceticism as dying to sin in Christ the Redeemer.

2) It promotes union with God in the form of friendship and fellowship with the Trinity, but through the Son.

3) It considers the Christian as another Christ, living for the glory of the Father and the redemption of the world.

Christian moral teaching does not neglect the negative aspect that is fundamental to all striving after holiness, namely, the avoidance of evil. In an earlier day, this aspect was strikingly symbolized by total immersion during the ceremonies of baptism, representing the Christian as dying, once for all, to sin. Buried with Christ, he rose to live, no longer in himself, but in and for God alone. St. Paul has given classical expression to this mystical

death of the Christian: "Thus do you consider yourselves also as dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts. And do not yield your members to sin as weapons of iniquity, but present yourselves to God as those who have come to life from the dead and your members as weapons of justice for God." [75] To the point also are these words of the Apostle: "Mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God." [76]

The negative aspect, however, is not enough. In fact, Christian spirituality must stress particularly the positive side of our baptismal calling. This consists in our life of intimate union and fellowship with the adorable Trinity. This trinitarian life, which is shared by all Christians, is the most important and the most significant feature of our calling as baptized Christians, and the beatific vision itself will only be its normal and crowning achievement. For we are all baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and this very baptism in the name of the Trinity was the final legacy of Jesus to His Apostles as He was about to leave them to return to His Father: "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world." [77]

It is not exaggeration, therefore, to say that baptism confers upon our human nature such an exalted status in Christ that it would be impossible to elevate it further. To be baptized, then, means to be a child of the Trinity, after the manner in which Jesus is the only-begotten Son of the Father. It means to have entrance through Jesus, and with Him and in Him, into the family of the three divine Persons, sharing with Them Their own life of thought and love, Their own eternal joy and happiness. It means, in the magnificent words of St. John, to have fellowship with the Father and the Son in one and the same Spirit.[78] This

is the inmost meaning of our spiritual rebirth in and through Christ, from its beginning in baptism to its crowning and glory in heaven. The whole spiritual life of the Christian, therefore, is no more and no less than living as a child of God within the family of the Trinity.

Let there be no misgiving in the matter: baptism establishes a real friendship between the three divine Persons and the newly baptized. Hence, for us Christians the Trinity becomes our home, the father's house that we must never leave, even as the Son never left the bosom of His Father. Progress in the spiritual life will consist simply in becoming more and more instilled with this very real presence of the Trinity in the soul, and allowing ourselves to be led by Jesus unto ever more intimate fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It was the Word Himself who came to make known to us this life-giving indwelling of the Trinity in the soul. "If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him." [79] It is baptism that marks the beginning of this presence of the divine Persons in the soul, giving it, together with grace, the right to enjoy the possession of the Trinity.[80]

The Word and the Holy Spirit are sent to the soul by the Father, who also gives Himself in unmeasured abundance. Thus the soul can unceasingly partake of the happiness of God. With a directness that is both striking and profound St. John sums up the whole spiritual life in this one essential endeavor, namely, in persevering in fellowship with the Father and the Son.[81] Is it not true in fact that God has but one desire: to give Himself and to be loved? St. Gregory Nazianzen has put it very aptly. God, he says, yearns to be yearned for: *sitit sitiri Deus*. The source of our spiritual and eternal life abides within us. Therefore, instead of squandering our energies in so much outward fuss and feverish activity, why not be more intent on allowing God to act upon the soul and to strengthen our bond of unity with Him? Jesus

has stated: "No one comes to the Father but through me." [82] Let us, then, permit ourselves to be led to the Father by the Son.

Christ, it ought to be remembered, is not only the path we must trod. He is also our model, and above all He is the very soul of our life. "It is now no longer I that live," exclaimed St. Paul, "but Christ lives in me." [83] Consequently, even as Christ, though pressed on every side by the crowds, kept His soul recollected and in uninterrupted contemplation of the Father, so ought the Christian soul, amid the welter of human concerns, always guard the consciousness of the Father's presence within it. In this way the mystery of Jesus will have abiding existence in its own self. If we remain in Jesus, if we love in Him, pray and work and suffer in Him, then each of our actions will share in the grandeur and holiness of Christ Himself. Such a life in Christ, even if outwardly commonplace, assumes a significance that is truly divine, having redeeming and atoning value for the whole mystical body.

Holiness, in other words, is not measured by outward appearance, but by the inward depth and goodness of the love with which we perform even the smallest acts of our daily life. To speak truly, a Christian life is never commonplace, for by living in Christ, whatever we do can be an act of perfect love. We have only to reflect on the immense supernatural value that underlay the hidden life of the Virgin of Nazareth. To all appearances there was nothing to suggest that within her soul, veiled from the eyes of men, there lay such store of grace and merit as to make her the Coredemptress of all mankind. To repeat, holiness lies within the soul; it has its wellsprings in the innermost dispositions of our heart. The following anecdote may serve to illustrate this point. A man saw several workers busy in a stoneyard. He asked each one: "What are you doing?" The first said, "I am cutting stone." The second answered, "I am supporting my family." But the third replied, "I am building a cathedral!" So it is with every Christian. With every one of his actions he ought, in effect, to be saying: "I am building the City of God."

By reason of our high estate, which puts us above the natural condition of man, we are all committed to doing the work of Christ; we must therefore approach our task with the heart of Christ. Such is St. Paul's exhortation. "Have this mind in you," he says, "which was also in Christ." [84] And: "For me to live is Christ." [85] No spirituality could be more simple, but also none more profound. The roots of such a spiritual life are traced directly to our baptismal calling. After baptism the Father sees in each of us, behind the outward appearance, the living image of Christ. And since, according to the traditional formula, the Christian is another Christ—*Christianus alter Christus*—it lies upon us to live as did Christ: for the glory of the Father and the redemption of the world. In one word, every Christian ought to live with the soul, that is, with the heart and mind, of the Christ that he is.

Notes to Chapter One

[1] John 3:3.
[2] Cf. John 3:5.
[3] Col. 2:12.
[4] Rom. 6:3–4.
[5] Cf. Rom. 5:12–21.
[6] I Cor. 15:3.
[7] Eph. 2:1–10.
[8] "Omni baptizato communicatur Passio Christi ad remedium ac si ipse passus et mortuus esset" (*S.T.*, III, 69,2c). The basis for the meritorious and satisfactory value of Christ's Passion being imparted to all Christians lies in the unity of the mystical body; by reason of this unity the members share in all the merits of the head. St. Thomas says: "Inasmuch as the baptized person becomes a member of Christ, the pains of Christ's Passion are imparted to him, just as if he himself had borne them" (*Ibid.*, ad 1m).
[9] "The head and members are as one mystical person. Hence the satisfaction of Christ belongs to all the faithful as to His members" (*S.T.*, III, 48,2,ad 1m). "The whole Church, which is the mystical body of Christ, is regarded as being one mystical person with its head, which is Christ" (*S.T.*, III,49,1c).

[10] I John 3:5.
[11] I John 2:2.
[12] Isa. 53:6.
[13] Eph. 5:2.
[14] Isa. 53:3.
[15] Eph. 2:18.
[16] Rom. 8:1.
[17] Col. 1:24.
[18] Rom. 8:18; cf. also II Cor. 4:17.
[19] II Pet. 1:4.
[20] I John 1:5.
[21] I John 4:8; 4:16.
[22] I John 5:7.
[23] The rational creature may "so be made partaker of the divine Word and His proceeding Love as freely to know God truly and love Him rightly" (*S.T.*, I, 38, 1c).
[24] John 10:34.
[25] I Tim. 6:16.
[26] Phil. 3:20.
[27] Cf. II Cor. 4:18.
[28] "The grace of one man is a greater good than the good of nature of the whole universe" (*S.T.*, I–II,113,9,ad 2m).
[29] Eph. 1:4, 6.
[30] Eph. 1:5.
[31] I John 3:1–3.
[32] I John 1:1–4.
[33] Cf. John 1:11–13.
[34] John 1:18.
[35] Gal. 4:4–6.
[36] Rom. 8:14–17.
[37] Rom. 8:25–26.
[38] Cf. Rom. 8:28–29.
[39] I John 3:1–3.
[40] "The operation of the Holy Spirit . . . together with the Father and the Son, moves and protects us" (*S.T.*, I–II,109,9,ad 2m).
[41] John 14:23.
[42] John 5:17.
[43] Matt. 5:8.
[44] Cf. M. M. Philipon, O.P., *The Spiritual Doctrine of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity* (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1951), pp. 53, 54; Eng. trans. by a Benedictine of Stanbrook Abbey.—Translator's Note.
[45] I Cor. 7:29.
[46] II Cor. 6:16.
[47] I Cor. 3:16–17.
[48] Eph. 1:5.

[49] Eph. 1:10.
[50] Rom. 8:33.
[51] Rom. 8:29.
[52] Gal. 3:27.
[53] Gal. 2:19.
[54] I Cor. 15:18.
[55] Phil. 1:21.
[56] II Cor. 5:17.
[57] Cf. Col. 2:6.
[58] Eph. 3:3–6.
[59] Eph. 4:4–6.
[60] Eph. 4:11–16.
[61] Titus 3:5.
[62] I Cor. 12:27.
[63] I Cor. 12:12.
[64] Gal. 3:28.
[65] "Qui in charitate vivit, particeps est omnis boni quod fit in toto mundo" (*De symbolo Apostolorum:* In "Sanctorum communionem").
[66] Rom. 8:32.
[67] I Cor. 2:9.
[68] I Cor. 7:29–31.
[69] II Cor. 5:6.
[70] II Cor. 5:1–9.
[71] Phil. 3:21.
[72] II Pet. 1:4.
[73] I Pet. 2:11.
[74] II Pet. 3:8–14.
[75] Rom. 6:11–13.
[76] Col. 3:2–3.
[77] Matt. 28:19–20.
[78] Cf. I John 1:3.
[79] John 14:23.
[80] "By the gift of sanctifying grace (*gratiae gratum facientis*) the rational creature is made perfect to the end that he may not only use the created good itself but also enjoy the divine Person Himself . . . the divine Person Himself is given" (*S.T.*, I,43,3,ad 1m).
[81] Cf. I John 1:3.
[82] John 14:6.
[83] Gal. 2:20.
[84] Phil. 2:5.
[85] Phil. 1:21.

CHAPTER TWO

Confirmation: Perfection in Christ

SUMMARY: 1. The First Pentecost. . . . 2. Our Pentecost. . . . 3. The Perfect Christian. . . . 4. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit: General Principles. . . . 5. The Spirit of Fear. . . . 6. The Spirit of Fortitude. . . . 7. The Spirit of Piety. . . . 8. The Spirit of Counsel. . . . 9. The Spirit of Knowledge. . . . 10. The Spirit of Understanding. . . . . 11. The Spirit of Wisdom. . . . 12. Be You Perfect as Your Heavenly Father Is. . . . 13. Soldier of Christ.

Confirmation, the sacrament of Christian perfection, makes us soldiers of Christ, apostles and, if need be, martyrs.

IT IS God's purpose that all beings achieve their perfection: a purpose that is clearly seen in every order of being, but even more clearly in the realm of grace. God wants saints that are perfect, but perfect in conformation to the image of His Son. It was Jesus Himself who laid down the program of Christian perfection for everyone, saying: "You therefore are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect." [1]

The economy of the sacraments shows that God wishes to bring all souls to the full development of their life in Christ. Thus it is that after baptism, which admits us into the divine Family, confirmation confers the fullness of the Spirit, making us perfect Christians so as to take our place as soldiers of Christ.

1. THE FIRST PENTECOST

To make the effects of confirmation better understood, the Church invites us to consider the remarkable transformation wrought in the Apostles by the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. For, proportionately speaking, the very same spiritual

effects are produced in us, according as we are faithful to the grace of the sacrament.[2]

Before Christ's Passion the Apostles were a somewhat unmannerly and unspiritual group, with little if any appreciation of God's invisible kingdom that Jesus came to establish on earth. Like other Jews, they were expecting an earthly rule in which Christ would assign them the highest positions. Indeed, the mystery of the Cross scandalized Peter, and Jesus was obliged to reprimand him sharply: "Get behind me, satan, for thou dost not mind the things of God, but those of men." [3] The future head of the Church had not yet learned the spiritual significance of Christ's mission on earth. In Gethsemane the disciples of predilection, those who had been specially chosen to be with Jesus, slept, leaving Him unattended in His agony and sweat of blood. And when a few moments later their Master was arrested, all of them fled in cowardly fashion.

Earlier the same evening Peter had been among those at the Last Supper, privileged to share the last intimate confidences spoken from the heart of Jesus. Now, but a brief while after his first Eucharistic communion and on the very evening of his ordination to the priesthood, this same Peter, quailing at the words of a maidservant, brazenly denies Him who for almost three years had been his Master and Friend. Not once, but three times; not in feeble words, but loudly and seemingly unashamed: "He began to curse and to swear: 'I do not know this man you are talking about.' " [4] Furthermore, in the immediate days after Golgotha the Apostles were without further hope in Jesus; they believed Him dead and gone forever. And even after His resurrection and triumphant return to heaven, they remained timid and afraid; so they went back to the upper room and shut themselves in for fear of the Jews.

After Pentecost, however, all is different. The Apostles reappear to the outside world, transfigured and boldly preaching Christ crucified. "Neither is there salvation in any other," [5] exclaims St. Peter. All prove themselves unfailing witnesses to

Christ "in all Judea and Samaria and even to the very ends of the earth," [6] preaching the gospel to every creature.[7] No longer are they daunted and dismayed; now they are beyond the reach of faintheartedness. "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." [8] *Non possumus non loqui.* In the name of Jesus they work miracles, cure the sick, raise the dead to life. Peter's mere shadow has but to fall on the sick, and instantly they are restored to health. Wonders of all sorts and miracles of charismatic gifts accompany their apostolic work. Thus the Apostles lay the foundations of a Church in which all members love one another like brothers, having all things in common, continuing steadfastly together in prayer and in the breaking of bread, and being of one heart and one soul in Christ.[9] They themselves set an example of most ardent love of Christ. Stripes, imprisonments, punishments of the most extreme kind, and death itself: all this they are seen enduring with joy, "rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus." [10]

The simple understanding of these men (men who had been slow of heart to believe) is suddenly transfused with an unprecedented outpouring of divine inspiration, the results of which were to be equally unparalleled. Notwithstanding the lack of those advantages commonly associated with culture and learning, these men launch a work that was to outstrip the accomplishments of the world's greatest geniuses. They produce the most astonishing revolution in all history, giving rise to a civilization that has stood for twenty centuries and brought to the world the greatest enlightenment it has ever known, namely, Christ. When they are brought before judges and tribunals, face to face with the most fearsome rulers of this world, their lips speak a wisdom that overpowers and confounds their enemies, clearly a wisdom that could only come from God. All of them end their life in martyrdom. No human power is able to stop the conquering march of their apostolate. In less than a century the faith preached by the Apostles spreads over the whole known world.

How are we to explain a moral transformation of such im-

mense proportions? The key to this question is found in the Acts of the Apostles: "And when the days of Pentecost were drawing to a close, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a violent wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as of fire, which settled upon each of them. And they were *all filled with the Holy Spirit* and began to speak in foreign tongues, even as the Holy Spirit prompted them to speak." [11] The multitudes that heard them were amazed and bewildered; whereupon St. Peter provided the explanation for this miraculous outpouring of God's Spirit: "This is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: . . . 'I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh. . . . Moreover upon my servants and upon my handmaids in those days I will pour forth of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.' " [12] Up to that time, "the Spirit had not yet been given, seeing that Jesus had not yet been glorified." [13]

But now, like an overpowering impulse of divine omnipotence, the Spirit burst in upon the souls of the Apostles and overspread the infant Church, marking the beginning of a new and decisive period in the course of the redemption. Jesus, as we know, had not wanted to complete His redemptive mission Himself. For reasons best known to His infinite wisdom, He left to His Spirit the full achievement of the work that His Father had entrusted to Him, even as He had also left a certain mysterious want to His Passion, so that by their personal sufferings some of His members could have a special role in the redemption of His mystical body.

Indeed, Jesus had made it clear that after Him the conduct of the Church was to be under the guidance of the Spirit. For the redemption is not the exclusive work of Jesus. All three divine Persons cooperated in our salvation. The Father sent His Son; the Word became flesh to die for us; and the Spirit, who is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son, will finish the redemptive work of the Word Incarnate. For this reason it behooved Jesus to return to His Father; otherwise the Spirit had not come. Once

seated at the right hand of the Father, He would send Him to the Apostles, to teach them all truth and help them in every need. "It is expedient for you that I depart. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you." [14] "I will not leave you orphans." [15] "I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to dwell with you forever." [16]

The Apostles were the first, though by no means the only ones, to receive the benefits of the Spirit. His work of enlightenment and direction pervades the whole Church to the end of time: "He will dwell with you, and be in you." [17] He will be a teacher of doctrine and holiness: "When he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will teach you all the truth." [18] "He will teach you all things, and bring to your mind whatever I have said to you." [19] Thus they would begin to fathom the many things that Jesus had spoken but did not unpuzzle to them. Also: "Many things yet I have to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." [20] The Spirit would unfold them. Furthermore, we have been reassured in advance against the fear of discontinuity or disagreement in the teaching of Jesus with that of the Spirit, for the Spirit "will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he will hear he will speak," [21] even as the Son spoke only from the bosom of the Father.[22] The Spirit, in fact, would receive the truth from the Son Himself, from whom He proceeds eternally: "That is why I have said that he will receive of what is mine, and will declare it to you." [23]

The absolute oneness between the truth of the Word and the truth of the Spirit is forever guaranteed by the fact that the Word and the Spirit have a common principle: the Father. Both proceed from Him. In the inmost being of the Trinity there is but one, eternal act of understanding, which is the Word spoken by the Father, the Word that was made flesh, to be the Truth Incarnate. It is the mission of the Spirit to make known within the Church the light of this Truth to every man of good will. Accordingly, there is a wonderful continuity and unity in God's

plan. Our redemption is truly the common work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

2. OUR PENTECOST

Though it may not be accompanied by the miraculous manifestations of the first Pentecost, the silent and unseen action of the Holy Spirit abides uninterrupted in the Church. There is a perpetual Pentecost, not less real for being invisible. The purpose of the sacrament of confirmation is precisely to impart to every Christian a similar fullness of the Spirit that marked the first Pentecost. This fullness the Christian needs to carry him through the struggles of life. The liturgical texts of the confirmation ceremony clearly point out the various effects the Spirit produces in all in whom He takes up His abode, bringing the fullness of His gifts. These are: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and piety, the spirit of the fear of God.

In confirmation Christ again sends His Spirit from heaven. He sends Him to all confirmed persons to bring to them the same fullness of understanding, holiness, and unyielding and vanquishing fortitude that inflamed the hearts and minds of the Apostles in the days of the infant Church. It is true that the charismatic gifts so prominent in the beginning have largely disappeared, but the same Spirit is communicated to the soul in a measure corresponding to the fervor with which each one receives this sacrament that makes us perfect Christians and apostles and soldiers of Christ. In the natural order, it may be noted, the transition from infancy to adulthood requires a period of growth stretching over many years; in the supernatural realm, however, God's almighty power produces instantly the full growth of the Christ-life within us.

Thus in this sacrament, as on Pentecost, the Spirit of Jesus suddenly descends upon the soul to bring to completion all the virtues and operative powers of the Christian. The Church

emphasizes that confirmation produces in the baptized soul the "fullness" of perfection. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church have always done the same. Invariably St. Thomas refers to confirmation as the "sacrament of the fullness of grace," [24] given to the members of the Christian community as a help against the difficulties of life and in defending the faith. "Baptism," he writes, "is given to acquire the substance of the supernatural life. . . . But this sacrament is given to acquire the fullness of the Holy Spirit, whose action is manifold." [25] Briefly, the effect of this sacrament is to bestow "the fullness of the Spirit." [26]

We see, then, that the sacrament of confirmation continues to make available within the Church the benefits of Pentecost. Its wondrous effect is to carry the soul beyond the results produced in baptism. Already in possession of the Christian soul, the Holy Spirit now pours out His superabundant graces and the fullness of His gifts. To Him, therefore, is rightly attributed that spiritual and moral triumph, for example, that bespeaks the Christian virgin and the Christian martyr. His personal, mysterious presence is responsible for those secret inspirations, those persistent beckonings, those continual impulses from the Spirit without which it would be impossible to be earnestly committed to, or long endure in, the way of salvation, and much less impossible to advance on the road of perfection. Assisted by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, however, the just man, since baptism already living the life of grace, is spurred on and hastened toward the life that is perfect. Thanks to these gifts, a soul that is receptive to the least inspirations from God grows rapidly in faith, hope, and love, and in the practice of all virtues. In such a soul the supernatural life will find its perfect development, for the efficacy of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is such as to lead the soul to the very summit of holiness.[27] In the Old Testament this sanctifying Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and in whom the cycle of the Trinitarian life is completed, issuing in uncreated holiness, this Spirit remained hidden behind the veil of figures and types. Since Pentecost, however, He is diffused through

Christ's Church, overflowing it with grace in measure unbounded; whence it wells forth into the souls of men in such wise and wealth as they may partake of all the life of the Trinity Itself.

The Apostles will always be the perfect example of the utter and exhaustive transformation produced in the soul by the coming of the Holy Spirit; but all Christians share in the manifold graces of the Spirit of love. For the same Spirit of wisdom, of understanding, of knowledge and counsel, the same Spirit of divine fortitude is given to all Christians who receive this sacrament, sustaining them in all the trials of life. The same Spirit is diffused through the souls of these other apostles and soldiers of Christ, adapting Himself to the vicissitudes of time and circumstance that confront the Church militant as the centuries go by. Indeed, on His part the Spirit of love pours forth His gifts without limit or parceling. How much the soul receives depends on how well prepared He finds it to receive Him. Each one is enriched with God's gifts according to his fervor and personal disposition. Christ does not Himself do things by halves. When He makes a soul His own, it is to shepherd it to the fullness of God.

3. THE PERFECT CHRISTIAN

The first effect of the sacrament of confirmation is to transform us into "perfect" Christians. Supernaturally speaking, it results in the baptized passing from the feebleness of childhood to the strength of manhood. Confirmation, in other words, is the sacrament of Christian maturity; it produces our full growth in Christ. With the Fathers and Doctors of the Church the traditional emphasis always has been on this aspect of the fullness of the Holy Spirit and His gifts. This, too, is the central idea of St. Thomas' treatise on confirmation, in which he never wearies of repeating that this sacrament, the complement to baptism, results in our attaining full stature, "the perfect age, as it were, of the supernatural life." [28]

Not only the virtue of fortitude, but the supernatural life as a whole, comprising both the virtues and the gifts implanted in baptism, is brought to full flowering. Confirmation strengthens our supernatural powers, bringing us to a condition of full supernatural growth, with the right to whatever graces we need in order to perform, in the realm proper to each virtue, the acts of a perfect Christian. The life of the theological virtues, especially, receives an increase of growth; but along with the development of the supernatural life of faith, hope, and charity goes the advancement of our moral life. Above all, the grace of confirmation consists in developing the fullness of the interior life, resulting in a corresponding fullness of personal holiness. It is from this interior holiness that the life of action in the service of the Church militant must flow, like an effect from a higher cause. In a comparable way, for instance, the mixed life of apostolic action must spring from the fullness of the contemplative life, even as the redemption of the world flowed from the incarnation of the Word and from the subsequent diffusion of the fullness of His infinite grace throughout His mystical body.

"Those who receive confirmation," says St. Thomas, "which is the sacrament of the fullness of grace, are conformed to Christ as having been, from the first moment of His conception, full of grace and truth, as is said in John 1:14." [29] Thereby we become perfect *Christs*. Perhaps we are astonished at such a view, thinking it too bold. But it is to be remembered that God's gifts should not be minimized, as they are if we consider them only from the narrow perspective of human capabilities. Rather, we ought to trust in the boundless liberality of a God who so loved us as to give His own Son. He who offered His Son on a cross, could He be niggardly when applying the fruits of redemption in the sacraments? Indeed, we are on very safe theological ground to consider the perfection of the Word Incarnate Himself as the prototype of every one who is confirmed. While living amid men, Christ as man was under the continuous help and guidance of

the Spirit of God. Already on earth the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in His soul unfolded under the unceasing glorious light of the beatific vision; and this vision, abiding at the highest level of His human soul, was the supreme rule and guide of His whole interior life, which even on earth, to repeat, was a life of the blessed beatific vision. Thus, day and night the plan of redemption, down to its smallest details, was unveiled to His human and beatific understanding in all the unmistakable clearness of the supernal light that never ceased to illumine His soul.

This ever-present vision of God's countenance maintained His soul in steadfast peace. Also, the Spirit of wisdom granted him the privilege of experiencing the infinite love of His Father: a love and fatherly care in which, for the Son's sake, the Father embraced, universally, every one of the souls redeemed by the blood of His Son. Furthermore, in consequence of possessing the beatific vision Christ's human understanding received in overflowing measure the gifts pertaining to the intellect, that is, the gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and counsel; and these revealed to Him, with perfect insight and clearness, every last detail of God's plan for the world. Besides this, the gifts pertaining to the affective or emotional side of human nature, the gifts of piety, fortitude, and fear, kept His soul intimately united at every moment with God the Father, filling His heart with the love of a brother toward all men, He being "the first born among many brethren." [30]

It is difficult to conceive any limit to the outpourings of the Spirit in the human soul of Christ, who by His divine nature is coequal with His Father, and whose Father, as Father, is His eternal principle in regard to His Person, being the Person of the Word. In fact, the munificence of the supernatural life of Christ's soul, filled with the gifts of the Spirit, will be one of the sources of our happiness amid the splendor of the saints. Indeed, it could not but have pleased the Holy Spirit to endow with the fullness of His graces and His charismatic gifts the human nature

of the Word, from whom, as well as from the Father, the Spirit eternally proceeds as Their mutual Love.

The Evangelists have not failed to underline this constant working of the Holy Spirit in the mystery of Christ. At the very moment of His conception the Holy Spirit was present to accomplish in the Virgin the mystery of the Incarnation, anointing Christ with the hypostatic union. Again at the solemn occasion of Christ's baptism the Spirit appeared, to be present for the public inauguration of His Messianic mission. The same Spirit led Him to the desert, was with Him when He moved among the throngs of Palestine, worked with Him His miracles, and in the hour of sorrow on Calvary kept His soul in perfect peace with God and under the protection of God's invincible power. All the actions of Christ's life and Messianic mission, especially His redeeming sacrifice, were accomplished under the rule of the Spirit of love. Thus it had been foretold by the Prophet Isaias: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him." [31] Beyond all doubt, the human soul of Christ was the foremost masterpiece of the Holy Spirit, so richly was it endowed with His every grace and every gift.

For the Christian soul to be conformed to the supreme perfection of the Word Incarnate a special help from the Holy Spirit is required. According to St. Thomas it is precisely this ultimate conformation that constitutes the proper effect of the sacrament of confirmation. For, to be a perfect Christ, the Christian must always live by the Spirit of Christ. It is through the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that the soul progressively assimilates and lives by the thoughts and sentiments of the soul of Christ. To what extent will the confirmed Christian participate in the fullness of the Spirit? No one can tell with exactitude. We do know, however, that each one receives of the Spirit of God in accordance with the mystery of divine predestination, and that this predestination, as we have already intimated, takes account of our personal cooperation with grace and the place we hold in the mystical body.

4. THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

In treating of the effects of confirmation we ought, first, to recall the general principles pertaining to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Christian tradition, in fact, was not slow to make particular use of the teaching on the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of explaining the effects of confirmation. Thus, St. Ambrose regards the "spiritual seal," that is, confirmation, as an outpouring of the seven gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of God.[33]

The same teaching is found in the liturgical texts. In the Gregorian Sacramentary we find a beautiful prayer of supplication in which the bishop invokes upon the newly baptized the descent of the Holy Spirit together with all His gifts. The prayer reads as follows: "O almighty and eternal God, who hast already deigned to regenerate these faithful ones through water and the Holy Spirit . . . send down upon them from on high Thy Paraclete, the sevenfold Spirit: the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and piety. Fill them with Thy Spirit of fear, and sign them with the sign of the Cross unto life everlasting, through Jesus Christ our Lord." [34]

In our present-day rite the bishop, wearing white cope, his miter removed, stands before the kneeling candidates for confirmation, and joining his hands prays as follows: "May the Holy Spirit come upon you, and may the power of the Most High keep you from sin." Then, after a few short verses, stretching forth his hands over the candidates he prays: "Almighty, everlasting God, who hast deigned to bring these Thy servants to a new life by water and the Holy Spirit and hast granted them remission of all their sins, send forth upon them Thy sevenfold Spirit of holiness, the Paraclete from heaven. Amen.

"The Spirit of wisdom and of understanding. Amen.

"The Spirit of counsel and fortitude. Amen.

"The Spirit of knowledge and of piety. Amen.

"Fill them with the Spirit of Thy fear, and graciously seal them with the sign of the cross of Christ unto life everlasting, through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, God through all eternity. Amen."

To appreciate the need of the gifts of the Holy Spirit we have only to consider that by reason of our calling in Christ we are summoned to a greatness partaking of the divine. Without the personal help of the Spirit of Jesus it would, indeed, be impossible to associate ourselves in all our actions with the thoughts and desires of Christ, for human nature as such is continually faced with so many obstacles that prevent the fullness of divine life from being realized in us. Through grace man, it is true, has been made Godlike; but he is not God. The fact of his divine calling does not abolish either the defects or the limitations that are part and parcel of his nature. The grace of adoption, received in baptism, makes of man a child of God called to live in fellowship with the Father, after the manner of the Son. But man, admitted to intimate converse with the divine Persons, may be compared to a child of common parentage that has been adopted into a royal household. Such a child is at first embarrassed by the awkwardness of his manners. He finds his new environment strange. He does not immediately possess the easy grace, the distinctive manner, and the impeccable demeanor that characterize the other children of the royal family.

We are in a comparable condition when through baptism we are admitted to the family of the three divine Persons. Though made Godlike by the grace of adoption, we yet lack that consummate excellence of spiritual mastery that would permit us to perform everything we do, even the least actions, in the perfect manner of a God living among men, after the example of the Word Incarnate. The reality of the invisible world remains shrouded by the obscurities of faith. We continue not without difficulty to put our hope in a God we cannot see. Our love is

not yet a perfect friendship; for it is with a Being we cannot clasp, a Being whose beatifying presence is not palpable.

Furthermore, living as we must amid the almost inextricable complexities of modern life, it is difficult still, notwithstanding the grace of adoption, to find the way in every circumstance that would bring us to God most quickly and securely. Our life of prayer does not become immune to spiritual dryness or to the inevitable distractions brought on sometimes by fatigue, sometimes by the wearisomeness that cannot be wholly overcome so long as we walk by faith. Trial after trial still tests our courage severely. And as for holy purity, most men continue to find the struggle far from over.

Is there a Christian who has not experienced this unhappy contrast between the greatness to which our divine calling summons us and the human conditions in which we must work to achieve it? Though possessing grace that is truly divine, we plod along laboriously; whereas, following the example of the Word Incarnate, we ought in all things to be like gods, walking among men in the serene and majestic manner of a God. It is clear that we possess the divine life but imperfectly. Hence we have need of the personal help of God. Our ignorance needs to be compensated by unmistakable and impelling inspirations flowing from His infinite knowledge, and our weakness by the all-powerful strength of His grace. Only then shall we have the resources to act, always and everywhere, as if endowed with God's own power. In short, before the Spirit of God can teach us to live with God's help in the manner of God, He must first take possession of our own, our very self.

The essential nature of the gifts of the Holy Spirit lies in their being certain habitual dispositions implanted in the soul by the grace of baptism and more firmly rooted by the grace of confirmation. These gifts give us the power to receive continually the guiding inspirations and promptings of God, so that while yet on earth, and even in the performance of our most commonplace actions, we may conduct ourselves in a manner that is truly God-

like.[35] They constitute an entire supernatural organism, as it were, deeply inwoven in the very fiber and texture of the soul and all its faculties. The result is that we are habitually disposed for the free workings of God within us, comparable to the way the keys of a piano are always ready to receive even the most delicate touch of the musical artist. Spiritual writers like to use another comparison. The virtues, they say, are like the oars of a boat; for in the exercise of the virtues we employ our own efforts, as well as the grace of God, to advance toward God. The gifts of the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, they liken to sails that are drawn tight to capture the ocean breeze; by this manner, whenever the wind is up, the vessel attains a speed far greater than is possible by the use of oars. The seven gifts are like seven sails; by them the soul and its powers are made ready to receive the inspirations from on high, permitting it to perform all actions under the guiding influence of the Spirit of God.

Actions so produced are no longer the actions of a man left to his own powers in the spiritual life; instead, they are actions which God Himself not only initiates but also directs throughout. The soul has only to allow itself to be directed, without hindrance, by the Spirit of light, of fortitude, and holiness. The Spirit then moves the soul interiorly and uses its powers as His instruments, like a master craftsman who does indeed make use of the tools of his craft in producing a masterpiece, yet remains the principal agent of the work produced. Of course, in the case of the soul we have to do with a free and intelligent instrument, whose own activity constitutes a true collaboration. These higher acts of the spiritual life, which are inspired by God, remain voluntary and meritorious in the fullest sense; they are acts by which a man, though entirely dependent on God, is most completely master of himself.

When thus moved by the Holy Spirit, the human *understanding* is able to glimpse without effort the hiddenmost depths of the mysteries of God. It begins to appreciate the surpassing grandeur and greatness of the most adorable Trinity. Illumined

by divine *knowledge,* the human intellect, moreover, is able to probe beyond the world of reality revealed by secondary causes, to come face to face, as it were, with the supreme Being, who is the first cause of all created activity. Furthermore, enlightened by the gift of *wisdom,* the soul, filled with love and acting through the will, is also granted a foretaste of infinite Love, who gives Himself to it in a degree and manner that cannot be communicated in words. And once the soul is held fast to God by love, the gift of *counsel* directs it in the realm of action. The result is that the soul responds with alacrity to the tasks imposed by its state of life. It exercises justice both in regard to God and men, displays courage that overcomes even the greatest difficulties, and safeguards perfect purity, by which it is released from bondage to the flesh and assured of faithfulness to God in all things. Through the influence of the gifts, God communicates to the soul His own life of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom. He reveals to it the innermost counsels of His eternal plan.

In addition, the spirit of *piety* preserves the bond of brotherly love between the soul and all other members of Christ's mystical body. This gift also engenders in the soul a true appreciation of all created beings. In consequence of this rightful rapport with all creation the soul is still more drawn to God, so that when it speaks His name it is the name of a most loving Father. Beyond this, when the gift of *fortitude* takes possession of the soul, it receives the power to overcome all obstacles that could prevent the will of God from being perfectly fulfilled in regard to itself. And the gift of filial *fear* maintains the soul in peace, that peace which comes of being secure in the hands of God. The soul may be conscious of its own weakness, but even more is it confident of the goodness of the Father, whose power is more than enough to keep it from all harm. Briefly, with the gifts of the Spirit the soul no longer acts by itself alone, so to speak, as in the practice of the virtues. It is rather God Himself that works in and through the soul.

The more receptive the soul is to the inspirations of the Spirit,

the more its actions are assimilated to the divine. Its life is then not only a human life made Godlike, as when it receives the theological and cardinal virtues; it is something more. By means of the gifts, it lives in a manner that is utterly beyond human compass; it lives as if in the manner of God, being wholly transformed in and by God. With God acting upon it directly, such a soul acquires both the highest degree of receptivity to inspirations from God and the maximum degree of personal activity. This condition is best exemplified in a soul that has achieved the state of transforming union, a state that represents the Spirit of God's highest form of acting within a soul. Thenceforth, there arises in the soul no thought, no impulse of love, no act of any kind that is not wholly from God. Once it has attained such heights, its way of life is above being classified in the usual way as active or contemplative. Such a soul, like that of the Word Incarnate or the Mother of God, is both a living synthesis and an indissoluble unity. It is both contemplative and apostolic, that is, active. It enjoys spiritual influence and fruitfulness that borders on the prodigal, so profuse and luxuriant as to dwarf the most brilliant achievements of the greatest geniuses. Such souls, utterly receptive to the movements of the Holy Spirit, become in God's hands the privileged instruments of His action in the Church. Thus, a St. Thérèse of Lisieux, secluded in her convent or nailed to her sickbed, but wholly surrendered to the Spirit of God, is more useful to the Church and the world than a host of apostolic workers or missionaries or learned doctors.

At this point one thing should be kept well in mind: namely, that the virtues and the gifts do not differ by their object, that is, by the acts performed. Their field of action is often the same, and both may be operative in the most ordinary daily tasks as well as in the highest mystical states. The whole difference lies in the incomparably superior manner in which the gifts of the Holy Spirit act upon the soul, a manner that may be described as *deiform,* whereby God Himself acts directly through the soul. Thus, for example, there is a vast difference between the prayer of a

fervent soul and the same prayer addressed to God by a saint. Did not the all-powerful supplication of the Virgin at the Cross obtain from the most merciful Trinity the salvation of the whole world? And who would pretend to measure the value of the all-embracing and redeeming cry of prayer that welled up from the soul of Christ?

Similarly, when through the commanding influence of the gifts the Spirit of Jesus achieves His triumph in the soul, it accomplishes all actions, even the most commonplace, in a manner that is wholly divine in source and substance; for this soul has been made one, as it were, with the supreme perfection of Christ's own soul. In such a soul are realized as nowhere else the words of St. Paul: "It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me." [36] All of which means that the perfect Christian is another Christ, living on earth in the simple yet divine manner of the Word Incarnate, under the personal and constant working of the Spirit of God.

5. THE SPIRIT OF FEAR

The gift of fear is essential to the very foundation that must underlie the entire structure of Christian perfection. It begets in the soul the basic attitude with which it behooves every creature to approach the infinite grandeur of God, namely, the awareness of its own nothingness. Vis-à-vis His creatures God might well say, as He did to St. Catherine of Siena: "I am He who is; you are one who is not."

The gift of fear removes from one's life the greatest obstacle to holiness, which is the obstacle of pride. For a soul that is acutely conscious of its utter helplessness on the one hand, and on the other hand has learned to seek God and not self, such a soul will always be careful not to withhold from God even the least particle of His glory. Like the Virgin of the Magnificat at the moment when great things had just been accomplished in her, it will bypass itself and be intent only on praising the out-

pourings of God's mercies, echoing the words of the Magnificat: "He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name." [37] In turn, God is pleased to pour forth in abundance His graces of predilection upon a soul in whom He is sure that all the benefits bestowed by Him will redound to His own glory.

Furthermore, the gift of fear, which is a most valuable aid to the virtue of temperance, also plays a decisive role in developing trust and confidence, qualities that are even more important for the spiritual life. In alerting the soul to be ever mindful of its inherent want and weakness, and not to rely on itself, the gift of fear impels it to seek refuge in God, putting its trust in Him alone. Divested of all self-love and emptied of all recourse to self, the soul from then on relies on nothing but the merits of Christ and the sovereign goodness of God. In this way the spirit of fear begets in the soul filial love and completely reassuring trust and confidence. Thus prepared, it will quickly attain the highest stage of love, which is that of total surrender.

6. THE SPIRIT OF FORTITUDE

The gift of fortitude consists in the Spirit of God taking hold of all the powers of a human being for the purpose of directing it, as if with the greatest ease, to the accomplishment of God's every wish, no matter how formidable the difficulties encountered. Endowed with this "power from on high," [38] which is the power that produces apostles, the Christian pursues the heights of holiness with a courage that overcomes all obstacles. His rock, his impregnable fortress, is God. Amid the infinitely varied circumstances of human life, the spirit of fortitude asserts itself under two essential forms: in the form of attack and in the form of resistance. It makes the soul both magnanimous and persevering. Its highest manifestation is displayed especially in face of death, and is epitomized in the celebrated phrase: "To hold fast unto death!"

In our day, the man of fortitude will have the boldness that

inspires great undertakings. Indeed, if the Spirit of God takes possession of a soul, it is to accomplish great things. Hence, the magnanimous man does not stop to reckon up all the various obstacles that could arise to hinder his vast designs. He knows the possibilities of his action, and without being either rash or timid he has absolute trust in the almighty power of God. This gift of fortitude is strikingly seen, for instance, in the spirit of conquest for Christ that inflamed and emboldened the Apostles after the Spirit of God had come upon them at Pentecost, with the suddenness and irresistibleness of a violent storm. The same Spirit of fortitude inspires the earnest enthusiasm of saints who spend themselves in the service of the Church and for the glory of God. They "hunger and thirst for justice." [39] They have but one wish: to extend the kingdom of God to the utmost limits of the earth, and to shed the last drop of their blood for Christ.

When souls are thus inspirited and animated, nothing, absolutely nothing, can stop, or even slacken, their upward thrust toward God. No obstacle will prevail over them, whether it be the contradictions of the world, the endless and implacable struggle with the invisible powers of evil, the meager means at their disposal, the lukewarmness of the good, or betrayal and abandonment by friends. Though poignantly aware of their own inadequacy on the one hand, and on the other of the superhuman task to which God calls them, they remain undaunted. Neither opposition on the part of men, nor the snares of the evil spirits, nor any creature whatsoever, be it in heaven, on earth, or in hell: in short, no interior or exterior obstacle, which is to say nothing, absolutely nothing, can hinder their resolute advance toward God. Their trust in the sovereign power of almighty God abides unshaken and unshakable. Of Him they are sure. All the rest leaves them indifferent. They pursue the work of God with a strength that overcomes both men and events, all the while in possession of complete assurance. We have here to do with strength that surpasses all human powers. This is the strength of God.

Among the saints the gift of fortitude manifests itself in two altogether different forms according to their particular vocation. One form consists in the heroism of greatness; the other in the heroism of smallness. The latter is exemplified, not in striking deeds that astound the world, but in faultless observance of the smallest detail; yet an observance which, being inspired by love, is never allowed to become an obsession. The dreadsome mortifications of the Curé of Ars and the captivating holiness of St. Thérèse of Lisieux are linked to these two different but complementary forms of the gift of fortitude. Let no one doubt that to avoid being commonplace even in small things one must have greatness, greatness of soul. Thus, in all of her actions, whether great or small, the Virgin of Nazareth, having become the Mother of God, never lost sight of the fact that within her dwelled the salvation of all mankind, and that notwithstanding the retirement that marked her life she was fulfilling her universal mission of Coredemptress of the world. The same spirit of fortitude accompanied her, still enthralled by the first joys of the Nativity, to the Temple, and inspired her to remain steadfast at the foot of the Cross, the Queen of Martyrs.

With the gift of fortitude the Christian advances toward eternal life without permitting himself to be halted by the obstacles of men or the difficulties of life. He triumphs over all dangers, surmounts all events, as though endowed with the strength of God Himself. It is as if he shared in the divine immutability, which overrules all the powers of the universe. To souls impelled by the Spirit of God, nothing is allowed to become an obstacle. This is the Spirit, the Spirit of fortitude, which breeds martyrs and saints.

7. THE SPIRIT OF PIETY

The gift of piety governs our relations with the divine Persons and with the angels and saints. Also, it puts the seal of brotherliness on our dealings with the other members of the mystical body.

Through this quality of brotherliness it exercises a constant influence upon everyday life inasmuch as it essentially transforms earthly life into a friendship with God and with our brothers and sisters in Christ. The spirit of piety, moreover, is the very soul of our prayer life. It establishes in the heart of a Christian, on the supernatural level, the filial instinct of a child of God, evoking the spontaneous love of a child. Accordingly, the effect of this gift is to make us regard God as the most loving Father whose every spiritual grace or material blessing is a token of His love.

When St. Paul explains that those who are led by the Spirit are free with the freedom of children whose home is God's household, he is simply describing the fundamental operation and effect of the gift of piety. It is this gift that moves the children of God to express the aspirations of their hearts in always the same word, but a word that says everything: "Abba! Father!" [40] Let it be well understood that the whole religion of Christ, the new worship of the gospel "in spirit and truth," [41] comes down to this: that we can say to God: "Abba! Father!" Every sentiment of the Christian soul in regard to God is deeply penetrated with the filial affection so natural to real children, an affection that is shown by turns in prayer, thanksgiving, worshipful praise, and if need be, in atonement.

At the same time the gift of piety keeps the soul in an attitude of devout reverence, so that the rights of God and His infinite majesty are always duly respected, but without impeding the spontaneity that marks a child's token of affection. For, even as in the intimacy of family life all rigid formality is foregone, so within the family of the Blessed Trinity a child of God should feel himself at home. Thus the gift of piety also instills in saintly souls a touching yet discriminating familiarity with Christ, and with the Blessed Virgin and all the angels in heaven: a familiarity that makes them realize that all are truly members of the same family, called to share the same life of happiness in an eternal home, where God will be all in all.[42]

8. THE SPIRIT OF COUNSEL

Human life is lived amid multiple and varied circumstances, circumstances to a great extent unforeseeable. In fact, daily life seems to be almost lost in a hopeless tangle of bothersome situations. Now, the role of the gift of counsel is precisely to translate the influence of the divine life of the soul to the realm of practical life. Consequently, its effect is to bring to bear upon concrete action the great directive insights that come from faith and the higher gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. Thus, it gives all children of God's family an unmistakable discernment of what is to be their personal road to final redemption; it does this not only in moments that are decisive in a man's life but also in every detail of a life that may be, to all appearances, uneventful and routine. The fact is that the ways to God are infinitely varied. For every individual there is a road to God that is the nearest one for him: a short cut, as it were. It is important, therefore, to be attentive to God's inspirations. These inspirations are never lacking, and they make it possible for every soul of good will to realize in the course of temporal existence the mystery of its own predestination.

It is the gift of counsel that tells each one what his place is in God's eternal plan and in His over-all providential rule of the world. It is through the same gift of counsel that we adjust ourselves in practical life to God's plan. The Spirit who assists the Church of Christ so she will not deviate from her mission to teach the truth and make men holy is the same Spirit who by His guiding light watches over and directs each soul in particular. It is this working of the Spirit, also, that accounts for those moments of sudden insight that change a man's whole life; and for those bolt-like inspirations that reveal, with unmistakable evidence, the particular manner in which each of us is to become like unto Christ. Thus, the Spirit helps us to seek and find the will of God.

As a rule the Spirit speaks to us in the form of precept and

instruction from the Church, or in the dress of everyday occurrences. For God does speak to us through daily events—they need not be astounding. This quiet but clearly distinguishable manner of speaking to us is quite sufficient to provide a sure indication of God's will; anything more is not necessary. The true children of God will permit themselves to be guided by their Father from heaven and by His Holy Spirit. And in this way Christ the Redeemer never ceases to send down upon us, as He did upon the Apostles, the Paraclete, to lead us to life eternal along the pathways of God.

9. THE SPIRIT OF KNOWLEDGE

The gift of knowledge gives us a keen sense and awareness, a living experience, as it were, of the vanity of every creature, that is, of its own nothingness. Man needs constantly to be reminded of the hollowness of creatures, for man's journey to God takes him through this visible world, and along the way many fleeting attractions solicit his love and affection. But he must not allow them to turn him aside or, what is worse, to hold him captive. On the contrary, he is to keep in mind that the true purpose of everything in this world is to raise man up to God. This, to be exact, is the role of the gift of knowledge.

In other words the gift of knowledge helps a man to discover the image of God in all things. Through this gift the soul escapes the delusory fascinations of all created things, so as to avoid the allurements of fugitive, sinful pleasures, which so quickly turn to bitterness that knows no end. The caution of St. Paul is to the point. Let those who have a wife, or the hollow goods of this world, guard against making these things their final end in life. No sooner have they enraptured the soul than death, with frightful dispatch, snatches us up. In the words of St. Paul, "The time is short . . . this world as we see it is passing away." [43]

It is the awareness of life's fleeting character that has caused many saints to weep tears of sorrow at the remembrance of a

wasted past, of so many precious moments lost beyond recall. Reconciled with God in their sorrow, they experienced the blessedness of those who mourn.[44] On the other hand, to souls who have remained pure and detached, to whom creatures have not been occasions of sin, all things serve as a steppingstone to God. To such a soul that has withstood the seductive fascinations of creatures of sin, persevering in virginal purity, all creation is like a magnificent book that speaks of God. To this soul, indeed, "the heavens show forth the glory of God," [45] and the tiniest atom of the universe proclaims His infinite power.

Thus, in sum, the gift of knowledge, which Sacred Scripture calls "the knowledge of the holy," [46] protects the soul from the sinful use of creatures; thereby, through a marvelous transformation, nature itself becomes again what it was originally meant to be: an emblem telling of God.

10. THE SPIRIT OF UNDERSTANDING

The gift of understanding permits us to view the Trinity and the whole array of God's mysteries with the clear gaze of the contemplative, that is, of him who, in a measure, sees what others do not see. The purpose of this gift is not to make us behold things in their created causes, as we do with the gift of knowledge, nor in their divine and uncreated causes, as with the gift of wisdom. Instead, through the supernatural brightness of God's own light this gift permits us to see things in themselves, penetrating to the inner veil of every mystery, to the very heart of all reality, until we find ourselves before the inaccessible core of being that faith can dimly discern, but whose unfathomable depths it cannot encompass.

For it must be remembered that no amount of genius or unremitting effort, in fact no created understanding whatsoever, is able to comprehend God in His fullness. Even as seen by the angelic world of pure spirits, God keeps His innermost being inviolably hidden. It is only through His revealed word that we

have some intimation of certain mysteries, such as the mystery of the divine Fatherhood, of the begetting of the Word equal with Himself, and of the eternal procession of a God who is love. Through His revealed word we also know that the whole universe issued from His creative and redemptive thought; that this thought, the Word, has elevated nature to the order of grace; that by this same thought, infinite, eternal, and subsistent, all activity of bodies and spirits, and all love, converges on the Incarnation, centers on the primacy of Christ, and redounds to the unceasing glorious praise of the Blessed Trinity.

The gift of understanding pulls back the veil far enough to give us a small glimpse of this entire supernatural world; yet even this meager gaze is enough to dazzle the eye of the soul that is beloved of God, making it feel at home within its supernatural abode, like a child in the house of its father. The Spirit alone, the Spirit who knows all and searches all, can give the soul this real experience, inchoate as it is, of the inmost depths of the Deity. Through the gift of understanding He gives the ability to penetrate, clearly and deeply as far as it reaches, the inner reality of all being, so that our vision is comparable, in a way, to the radiant, intuitive vision and understanding that God has of Himself. When illumined by this supernatural gift of the soul, we are able to discover in external signs the key to hidden realities; we can cut through the appearances of things to the center within where mystery dwells; we see the invisible in the visible; and behind the stammering human words that speak to us of Him we are able to discern the uncreated eternal Word.

Thus, to a soul enlightened by the Spirit of God the interior reality of things is, so to speak, an open book. And to bring about this supernatural insight is truly the role of the gift of understanding. We find again, through this gift, the divinely intextured pattern and portent of the universe. When we read the Sacred Scriptures, we see clearly depicted the whole economy of redemption, conceived and accomplished by the Son together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. And in the sacraments we do

not stop at the external rites; but the soul, breaching the wall of signs and symbols, catches the gleam and glimpse of the bright mystery within, seeing, for example, the Eucharist as perpetuating in the Church the sacrifice of the Cross. Indeed, every ritual action performed by the Church is seen as applying to souls the countless benefits of the redemption. As a matter of fact, through the gift of understanding the soul sees God: in heaven, through the beatific vision; on earth, through faith with a clarity that is still obscured, as it were, by the very brightness of His countenance, yet in a manner that allows us to apprehend beyond all doubt His absolute, His divine transcendence. God manifests Himself to the soul, but it is like the manifestation of Mount Sinai. Only by putting aside every created image and instrument of understanding can the soul come close enough to hear the God of Moses say again, clear and simple: "I am who am." [47]

II. THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM

The gift of wisdom consists in the soul's being granted the highest contemplation of God that grace can bestow upon a mere creature. Its contemplative and apostolic role embraces all activities of a Christian. To a soul enlightened by the gift of wisdom all becomes clear and meaningful. God is made manifest in the infinite splendor of His divine nature comprising perfections beyond number and limitation. Through the gift of wisdom the soul is able to find at the pinnacle of all created being, and infinitely above all creation, the one Being, revealed in Scripture as "He who is," the only necessary Being, eternally living. From this divine essence shines forth, as from a radiant center whose gleaming rays extend to infinity, the innumerable array of divine attributes, both in the order of being and in the order of activity and moral perfection.

Thus, God is unceasingly manifested to the soul in His sovereign goodness, in His immutable eternity, His omnipresence, His knowledge and comprehension of all that is, and in His

understanding, which is the source of all truth. He is seen as the Being that is self-sufficient, whose will rests in Himself as in the infinite good that He is. His love becomes more palpable, as also His justice and mercy and almighty power, whose creative action brought forth a universe out of nothing, a universe whose course lies in His unerring hands. More clearly evident, also, appears His infallible providence, which watches not less over the smallest atom than over the immensities of nature and the world. Likewise unsealed, though yet veiled, is the mystery of His Unity, unfolding in the mystery of the Trinity, of three Persons, equal and consubstantial in the absolute identity of one and the same divine nature where all is had in common: light, love, and happiness, possessed in a life without end, a life that by grace all the blessed spirits and all men of good will are called by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to share. The gift of wisdom enables the soul to contemplate these profound mysteries of the Blessed Trinity and of God's action in the world. Such a soul judges everything in the light of the divine Being and attributes. It embraces the whole ensemble of created causes in one clear and comprehensive view, and reduces them to their ultimate source. Specifically, then, the gift of wisdom grants the soul the power to contemplate God and to behold the universe by the light of the Word Himself, the eternal Wisdom of the Blessed Trinity.

When, by the grace of Christ, the soul has been transformed in God, it finds itself at home in entering upon the hidden mysteries of the Trinity. There it dwells amid the company of the Father, the Word, and the Spirit of love, sharing in the oneness of Their common life. For, in the words of Sacred Scripture: "He who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit with him." [48] Once admitted to the intimacy of the divine family, it is as though the soul no longer viewed things in and for themselves, but instead loved and understood them in the love and understanding that God has. In this mystical experience it touches at the very heart of the Trinity. Nothing can then hold back the rapture of a soul thus made one with Christ; it lives in the love that breathes

in the bosom of God. Blessed the soul, indeed, that experiences such a foretaste of eternal happiness, such anticipations of God's own bliss and blessedness. In its heaven within itself, the soul is privileged to find and enjoy the delights of the Trinity. At this pinnacle of the spiritual life on earth, the Christian soul in all its movements acts under the impulse of the Spirit of love: it is the moment of transforming union.

Moreover, in this highest degree of spiritual union all acts of the soul, even those which appear to be most trivial, become acts of highest and purest love. Hence, of a soul guided only by the wisdom of the Spirit of God, one can say what St. John of the Cross said of the soul that has come to the mystical summit of Mount Carmel: namely, that here dwells nothing that is not burning zeal for the honor of God. As in the soul of Christ, so in this soul there remains but one impelling desire, which gives all else its proper measure and harmony: the desire to seek only the glory of the Father, the glory of God. And like Christ, this soul might well say to the Father: "I have glorified thee on earth." [49]

For, as we have intimated, the soul in possession of such exalted wisdom does not stop short at contemplation, but by the very nature of things is moved to love; and thus the gift of wisdom also becomes the highest motive and measure of its active life. The soul that has seen and experienced in the supernal light of the Spirit the "All" of God and the "nothingness" of whatever is not God is bent on making this glorious light of wisdom the guiding star of its whole practical life. It seeks and labors for the triumph of God's sovereign rule not only in its own life but all about itself, everywhere. The perfect example of souls where God's rule and kingdom is utterly established is found in the life of the blessed in heaven; to them "God [is] all in all." [50] But already on earth a soul that is led solely by the Spirit of God can transform even the smallest actions into tokens of perfect fealty and highest love unto the glory of the Trinity. And these heights of transforming union may be achieved in a life that on the surface is so undistinguished as to seem quite

ordinary and commonplace. It was, in fact, one aspect of the great mystery in the soul of the Word Incarnate that even through the lowliest circumstances of His hidden life He knew how to render infinite glory to His heavenly Father.

Thus, the gift of wisdom reconciles extremes. Like the divine understanding, by this gift the soul is able to bring together under one view and in one act of understanding all events of life and all beings of the universe. It teaches the soul how to find in all things the handmark of God. With St. Paul the soul transfused by the light of this gift can exclaim: "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!" [51] But in order to probe God's incomprehensible judgments and enter upon the mystery of His unsearchable ways, which "thou didst hide . . . from the wise and prudent, and didst reveal them to little ones," [52] man, to be sure, is in need of light, the light of the Spirit of God.

12. BE YOU PERFECT AS YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS

By many, a life of intimate union with God, such as we have described, is regarded as impossible or as limited to a select few. But the truth is that our Lord's precept to strive for perfect love and charity is strictly binding on all. The obligation to love God does not admit of nice limitations. It is as boundless as God Himself, as is clearly stated in the following words of Sacred Scripture: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength." [53]

Thus, the model we are bidden to imitate is none other than our Father in heaven: "You are therefore to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect." [54] And the second commandment, like unto the first, is also unrestricted: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." [55] It is beyond question, then, that man's conduct must be motivated by love, and his love is to follow the example of the Father and

the Son, having its source and sustenance in Their same Spirit. Accordingly, it is in the inmost life of the Blessed Trinity that man's love finds its highest ideal.

The aforesaid view, which is as solidly grounded as it is uplifting and inspiring, goes immeasurably beyond the all too common and ruinous opinion that the pursuit of evangelical perfection is reserved to priests and to men and women who have taken vows in a religious order, whereas the generality of Christians (so it is said) need aim no higher than keeping the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church. This is a pernicious error; its harmful consequences in practical life are beyond calculation. It reduces the Christian ideal to a minimum and stifles whatever aspirations a soul may have to seek the heights of holiness. At a time like the present, when, more than ever, the Church counts upon saints in the world for the re-christianization of the world, it is of the highest importance to bring home again to Christians that the precept to strive for perfection is binding on all. For, when Christ proclaimed His ideal of holiness and His precept to seek the fullness of divine life, saying, "You are . . . to be perfect," [56] He spoke to all men without distinction. And was not St. Paul addressing Christians in the world, Christians generally, when he wrote: "This is the will of God, your sanctification"? [57]

Every one a saint! There you have not only the spirit of the gospel but also, in effect, the explicit precept of our Blessed Redeemer. If this spirit were thoroughly realized, and this precept utterly fulfilled, the life of the Church would be renewed to its very depths and the face of the earth changed almost beyond recognition. No class of men, no social condition or milieu, is excluded from this summoning to the perfect life. Married people no less than others have been called by Christ to seek the highest degree of holiness. All Christians, in virtue of their baptismal calling, are under real obligation to strive after the full development of the Christ-life within them. If this be true by reason of baptism, so much the more are they obligated in virtue of the

sacrament of confirmation to act in all things as Christians made perfect in the image and likeness of the Son.

13. SOLDIER OF CHRIST

In his upward journey to God the Christian, as we know, does not walk alone. Baptism makes him a living member of the whole mystical body. Thereby his personal life unfolds itself on a social and corporate plane that is as wide and far-reaching as the world itself. For the Christian is the member of Christendom. All his personal graces and his individual efforts to attain holiness bring him squarely within the communion of saints, through which his own life is appointed to the common good of the whole Church. In some ways, therefore, the life of the Christian has its parallel in the life of the citizen. During the long years of childhood and adolescence the individual lives by the benefits society provides, without being able to make any contribution of his own. But once of age and in possession of full manhood, he must place all his strength and powers at the service of the common good.

In founding His Church, Christ took account of the social nature of every human being. Thus, the newly baptized person is like a newborn babe whom the Church takes into her arms to watch over with the care of a mother. But with confirmation he passes from childhood to manhood and, once a full-grown man, he must in turn be ready to endure combat for Christ. Up to this point, one might say, he has lived only for himself. But now the fullness of the Holy Spirit is bestowed on him, as it was on the Apostles, for the purpose of defending the faith and the spiritual treasures of the Church of Christ. Confirmation, in other words, is the sacrament that is designed to make apostles and soldiers of Christ and, if need be, martyrs. The fullness of Christ which it imparts to the baptized person, making him a perfect Christian, is intended, whole and entire, for the service and triumph of the Church militant.

The leaders of the army of Christ are the bishops; theirs is the task to mold and consecrate the soldiers of Christ. As the rite of confirmation clearly indicates, through this sacrament they imprint on their souls an indelible mark, making them ready to fight for Christ under the banner of the Cross. To be sure, the first effect of confirmation is to bring about a more perfect conformation of the soul to the supreme perfection that adorns the Word Incarnate, thus producing the perfect Christian. But, as in all sacraments, from the primary effect also follow certain secondary effects and graces, such as the grace to be unyielding in the struggles of life whenever and wherever the faith is at stake, no matter how hard and fierce the encounter; the grace to endure, without fear or dread, all afflictions and torments, even the danger of death and death itself; and the grace to hold firm against the appalling denial of Christ on the part of the contemporary world. Like the Church itself, the Christian soul thus strengthened by the Spirit remains invincible in face of the growing apostasy of nations.

It was the Spirit of Pentecost that made the Apostles witnesses to Christ unto the farthermost ends of the earth, impelling them to gain for Him all nations. They did not grudge their labors, nor even their lives. Unhappily, there are signs that we have lost this sense of militancy as something that should characterize the life of every Christian. The specific purpose of the sacrament of confirmation is to inspire us with this same apostolic spirit of conquest for Christ and with this same desire to serve God even to the point of dying for Him. Every Christian, then, ought to have the soul of an apostle and martyr. For a soldier of Christ never saves himself alone. He is responsible for the salvation of his brothers, and he must work with Christ in the task of redeeming the entire world.

Perhaps, in this connection, one might ask whether the greater part of our spiritual writers have not given the element of withdrawal from the world too much prominence in their forms of devotion. Too many of our devotions, it would seem, are drawn

up against a background that is excessively self-centered and narrow, thus failing to achieve a realistic and genuine integration with life as it is. Yet Christian spirituality is essentially a spirituality of combat. In this matter of piety and devotion it is absolutely necessary to recapture the corporate and altruistic conception of the gospel, and to realize once more that it is the whole of human life and the whole world that the Spirit of Christ seeks to penetrate and permeate in order to quicken and renew them.

Indeed, at the present time one of our greatest needs is another St. Paul, one that would again preach to us his famous hymn to apostolic love, the love that makes men conquerors for Christ and gives them the strength and courage to shrink from no sacrifice. It cannot be too much stressed that the calling of every Christian is to be a combatant, a "soldier of Christ." [58] Hence, one cannot but deplore that so many Catholics literally squander away their baptismal graces. And many more are unfaithful to their confirmation promises as well, betraying Christ not only in their conscience but openly and publicly, for all the world to see, in their family and professional lives. Clearly, confirmation has lost none of its value and relevancy to the world. On the contrary, it is needed as never before. For we know that the Church counts heavily on this sacrament of the apostolate and of Catholic Action as a means of helping her priests in the task of rechristianizing the world.

The apostolic and militant aspect of the mission to which the character of the sacrament summons us is strikingly brought out in the rite of confirmation. The bishop is the hierarchical leader; it is by him that the soldiers of Christ are officially inducted into the army of Christ. From the beginning, ecclesiastical writers have emphasized this dedication to militant action. Thus, in the second century Tertullian wrote: "We were committed to combat for the living God when we responded to the words of the sacrament." [59] Another text, one from the fifth century, admirably expresses the traditional teaching on this point.

"The Holy Spirit," it says, "who descends upon the waters of baptism to infuse them with His sanctifying power, bestows perfect innocence on the baptized, and in confirmation He imparts an increase of grace. . . . After baptism we are confirmed for the purpose of combat. . . . We receive the gift of fortitude. . . . Confirmation arms and prepares us for the struggles and combats of this world. . . . The helps provided by confirmation are necessary if we are to be victorious." [60]

The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* sums up the Church's teaching as follows: "The forehead, then, of the persons to be confirmed is anointed with sacred chrism; for by this sacrament the Holy Spirit infuses Himself into the souls of the faithful, and increases in them strength and fortitude to enable them, in the spiritual combat, to fight manfully and to resist their most wicked foes. Wherefore it is indicated that they are to be deterred by no fear or shame, the signs of which appear chiefly on the forehead, from the open confession of the name of Christ." [61] To put it briefly, confirmation bestows upon the Christian every grace of state he needs to be a true apostle of the gospel and a "perfect soldier of Christ." [62]

The Church militant appeals to the good will of all her children, assigning each to his combat post. Priests, lawmakers, workers, fathers and mothers of families: all are committed to combat for God. Among all, there exists a wonderful solidarity, which unites the efforts of one with those of the whole Christian world in continuing and completing the work begun by the Apostles and martyrs. Added to this, we are in the tradition of that long line of devout men and women who from the beginning of the world have always stood up against the powers of evil to ensure the triumph of God's cause, as well as in the tradition of those who will continue to stand up until the end of time.

The Christian soldier, we have said, is committed to battle for Christ. It would be the gravest mistake to think that our battleground is somewhat imaginary, or that it touches only the fringe of human life. By no means! Our battleground is real, envelop-

ing our whole life. It is in each of our daily actions, and not merely on special occasions or in the peaceful atmosphere of the home, that we are to be witnesses to Christ. All Christians, moreover, whatever their station in life, must stand firmly militant for Christ at their respective posts. It may be a young Christian lady who keeps herself pure in the world; or a man and wife who remain faithful to each other and to their home in spite of so many temptations encountered in their social or occupational environment; or a factory worker who practices and professes his faith without regard to human respect; or an industrial head and employer who strives honestly to secure the rights of social justice according to the spirit of the gospel; or the contemplative hermit and cloistered monk and nun, whose whole life is a silent yet stirring affirmation of God; or a ruler of the land with whom God and His rights come first in every piece of legislation. All Christians must be soldiers of Christ. Upon all of them confirmation bestows the official title of soldier of Christ; to all it gives the grace to defend the spiritual interests of the Christian society in the world.[63]

A pontifical document of recent times points out very clearly the twofold source upon which rests the authority of the Church's hierarchy to designate the official workers and soldiers in the field of Catholic Action. The remote source is baptism, the proximate source confirmation. "In truth," wrote Pope Pius XI, "if we look at the matter closely we shall see that it is the sacraments of baptism and confirmation which impose, among others, the obligation of the apostolate, that is, the obligation to be of spiritual assistance to one's neighbor. Through confirmation we are made soldiers of Jesus Christ. Now, who does not see that a soldier must brave fatigue and combat, not merely or mainly for his own, but for the good of others. Not only confirmation, however, but also baptism imposes the duties of the apostolate, though in a manner that is not so evident to those of purely secular outlook. For it is through baptism that we become members of the Church, that is, of Christ's mystical body. Among the members

of this body—and the same holds true of any organism—there must be a solidarity of interests, a mutual giving and receiving of life. As St. Paul says in the Epistle to the Romans, 'We, the many, are one body in Christ, but severally members one of another.' [64] One member must help another. No one can remain inactive. Each in turn receives and must give. Now, every Christian receives the supernatural life that flows through the mystical body—that abundant life that Christ came to bring into the world [65]—and every Christian, therefore, must transfuse this life to others who do not have it, or who but have it in feeble measure and in appearance only." [66]

The Fathers very properly insist upon the virtue of fortitude as the special effect of this sacrament. As remarked earlier, throughout the history of the Church this gift of fortitude has manifested itself in two pre-eminent ways: in the spirit of conquest for Christ and in the spirit of sacrifice to the point of martyrdom. Today, the same grace is still given to all who are confirmed, and it is up to each one so to conduct himself as to reap the maximum benefit from the fullness of the Spirit conferred in this sacrament. The Church is always in need of apostles and saints. The redemption goes on. In truth, as all can see who know how to judge things from God's standpoint, a gigantic struggle divides the world into two cities, identified in the cosmoramic view of St. Augustine as the City of Evil and the City of God. Our choice, and choose we must, is between Lucifer and Christ. "He who is not with me is against me." [67] Pilate's gesture, neutral in appearance, was in fact a betrayal.

It should be evident that the spirit of Pentecost must again quicken the hearts of all Christians. Basically this spirit summons us to a twofold commitment. On the one hand it requires us to have an earnest care and concern for the reconquest of the world to Christ, and on the other hand a ready and resolute will to suffer come what may for the name of Jesus. Here, as everywhere, our Lord has left the supreme example. In His work of redemption He manifested the most heroic fortitude. Thus He

was able to wrest from Satan his dominion over souls, and to offer to His own Father the newly won kingdom of mankind. He showed Himself the Soldier of God and the Martyr for His Father's glory and the salvation of the world.

A similar apostolic and redemptive mission awaits all true Christians; for in the bitter struggles undergone daily by the Church militant it is still Christ carrying on His spiritual combat in the person of His followers. Hence, the soldiers of Christ know that in every peril, in the greatest as in the smallest, they can count on the help and support of God and the assistance of the Spirit of Jesus. As our Lord promised: "They will deliver you in their synagogues, and you will be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a witness to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not be anxious how or what you are to speak; for what you are to speak will be given you in that hour. For it is not you who are speaking, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks through you." [68] And again: "No servant is greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also." [69] But the Christian soldier will remember that Christ also declared: "In the world you will have affliction. But take courage, I have overcome the world." [70]

Thus, to sum up, we have seen that the outpouring of the fullness of the Spirit received in confirmation produces in every Christian, in proportion to his cooperation with the grace of the sacrament, a transformation analogous to that experienced by the Apostles. For in this sacrament the Spirit of Jesus descends on the Christian with the fullness of His gifts, advancing his baptismal life to a degree of perfection that is truly amazing. He now shares in the fullness of the same Spirit that breathed in the Word Incarnate. From now on, others may, if they wish, follow the false prudence of the flesh, needlessly and heedlessly burying themselves in the affairs of the world. As for himself, however, he

will seek the pattern of his life in the inspirations and counsels drawn from the Spirit of Christ Himself. Enlightened by the gift of knowledge, he is able to appraise creatures and the interplay of secondary causes in the world with the perfect detachment and objectivity of the Spirit of Jesus. Being yet on earth he must, of course, live by faith, without the clear perception that comes from immediate and intuitive knowledge; but this faith brings peace and understanding, affording certainties that are infallible because their source is in God's own uncreated light.

Furthermore, through the higher gifts, which are more contemplative in nature, he finds special delight in meditating on and contemplating the Blessed Trinity. These gifts permit him to survey the universe from the heights of the Word's own understanding and wisdom, so that his knowledge of God and the universe is, in effect, assimilated to Christ's own knowledge. As for the other gifts of the Holy Spirit, they too serve to make complete his conformation to the Word Incarnate. Thus the spirit of piety helps the confirmed Christian to maintain in regard to the Father the same habitual disposition of filial love and trust as abides in Jesus. Like Jesus, then, he will always be seeking the Father's glory, and always ready to intercede in behalf of his brothers to gain for them grace and salvation.

For this reason, whatever may befall the confirmed Christian, be it ever so agonizing and mortifying, he will not suffer his soul to be disheartened. For he knows that his refuge is in the invincible strength of the soul of Christ, and that with Christ he will triumph over all the enemies of God. If there is one thing that can cause him to fear, it is the consciousness of his own weakness. But to overcome this apprehension he has the Spirit of love, who drives out all fear and instills the hope that sustains him against and overcomes all attack. Thus strengthened and comforted he surmounts his own helplessness, entrusting himself wholly to the almighty power of Christ his Saviour.

Accordingly, it should be clear from what we have said that by the graces of confirmation, operating under the command

and direction of the gifts, we are granted a real and authentic participation in the fullness of the Spirit of Christ. Such is the full import of the words of St. Thomas cited earlier in this chapter: "Those who receive confirmation, which is the sacrament of the fullness of grace, are conformed to Christ as having been, from the first moment of His conception, full of grace and truth, as is said in St. John, 1:14." [71] And what is it that St. John says? "The Word," he says, "was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we saw his glory—glory as of the only-begotten of the Father—full of grace and truth. . . . *And of his fullness we have all received.*" [72] To speak comparatively, the baptized Christian is only an inchoate Christ, as it were, whereas the confirmed is a fully matured Christ, a perfect Christ. Every action of the confirmed, therefore, ought to imitate the supreme perfection of the Word Incarnate. For he is another Christ. Like Christ Himself, he is engaged in combat to bring about the triumph of God's cause throughout the world.

Notes to Chapter Two

[1] Matt. 5:48.

[2] The Church herself makes it clear that the best method for bringing home the effects produced in the soul by the sacrament of confirmation is to compare them to the effects produced in the Apostles on the first Pentecost. Thus the Council of Florence in 1439 declared: "The effect of this sacrament consists in this: that the Holy Spirit is given for the strengthening of the Christian, just as He was given to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, the purpose being that the Christian may boldly profess the name of Christ." The Latin of the Council reads as follows: "Effectus autem hujus sacramenti est, quia in eo datur Spiritus Sanctus ad robur, *sicut* datus est Apostolis in die Pentecostes, ut videlicet Christianus audacter Christi confiteatur nomen" (*Decretum pro Armenis*).

The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* also recommends that pastors follow this method: "If pastors wish to show the divine efficacy of this sacrament—and this, no doubt, will have great influence in affecting the minds of the faithful—it will be sufficient if they explain what occurred

to the Apostles themselves" (Part II, The Sacraments: Confirmation; quoted from *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests,* Eng. trans. by John A. McHugh, O.P., and Charles J. Callan, O.P., New York, Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1934, p. 210).

This method of referring to the effects produced on the first Pentecost in order to elucidate the effects of the sacrament of confirmation was also preferred by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. It is the guiding principle of St. Thomas' whole treatment of confirmation in the *Summa;* cf., for example, III,72,7.

[3] Mark 8:33.
[4] Mark 14:71.
[5] Acts 4:12.
[6] Acts 1:8.
[7] Cf. Mark 16:15.
[8] Acts 4:20.
[9] Cf. Acts 2:45,46; 4:32.
[10] Acts 5:41.
[11] Acts 2:1–4.
[12] Acts 2:16–18.
[13] John 7:39.
[14] John 16:7.
[15] John 14:18.
[16] John 14:16.
[17] John 14:17.
[18] John 16:13.
[19] John 14:26.
[20] John 16:12.
[21] John 16:13.
[22] Cf. John 1:18.
[23] John 16:15.
[24] "Confirmatio est sacramentum plenitudinis gratiae" (*S.T.*, III,72,1, ad 2m).
[25] *S.T.* III,72,2,ad 2m.
[26] *S.T.*, III,72,4,ad 1m.
[27] In the encyclical *Divinum Illud Munus,* May 9, 1897, Pope Leo XIII declared: "These gifts are of such efficacy as to lead him (i.e., the confirmed Christian) to the very summit of holiness."

Those who want a thorough and profound exposition of the role of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual life could not do better than read and earnestly meditate on this most estimable encyclical in its entirety.

[28] The following are some clear and significant quotations from the *Summa* of St. Thomas:

a) "So therefore does man receive spiritual life in baptism, which is a spiritual regeneration; while in confirmation man arrives at the perfect age, as it were, of the spiritual life" (III,72,1c; Dom. Trans.).

b) "In this sacrament the fullness of the Holy Spirit is given for the

spiritual strength which belongs to the perfect age. But when a man comes to perfect age, he then begins to benefit others through his actions; whereas previously he lives solely for himself, as it were" (III,72,2c). Hence, external, social action, in the service of others, is only a derived effect incumbent on the confirmed, similar to the way that a property, philosophically speaking, derives from an essence or nature.

c) "Just as baptism is a spiritual regeneration unto Christian life, so also is confirmation a certain spiritual growth bringing man to perfect spiritual age. But it is evident, from a comparison with the life of the body, that the action which is proper to man immediately after birth, is different from the action which is proper to him when he has come to perfect age" (III,72, 5c; Dom. Trans.).

d) "This sacrament should be given to those on the point of death, that they may be seen to be perfect at the resurrection" (III,72,8,ad 4m; Dom. Trans.).

Even those, it might be added, who never reach maturity but are removed from the struggle of life before they are old enough to confront it, such as infants and children, even these should be given this sacrament —a clear indication that confirmation, while being the sacrament of the apostolate, is first of all the sacrament of Christian perfection.

[29] "Illi qui confirmationem accipiunt, quae est sacramentum plenitudinis gratiae, *Christo conformantur,* in quantum ipse a primo instanti suae conceptionis fuit *plenus* gratiae et veritatis, ut dicitur Joan. 1:14" (*S.T.*,III,72,1,ad 4m).

[30] Rom. 8:29.

[31] Isa. 11:2.

[32] The sovereign perfection of the Word Incarnate was such that all of his acts of virtue, even the least of them, were necessarily performed under a special and personal impulse of the Holy Spirit. It is probable that this was also true, though to a lesser degree of perfection, in each act performed by the Mother of God, seeing that from the first moment of her rational life she found herself on the highest level of the transforming union.

[33] "Accepisti signaculum spirituale, spiritum sapientiae et intellectus, spiritum consilii atque virtutis, spiritum cognitionis atque pietatis, spiritum sancti timoris" (*De Mysteriis,* VII,42; *P.L.*,16,403).

[34] *Liber Sacramentorum, P.L.*,78,90.

[35] On this point St. Thomas writes: "Since the gifts are given so we may act in a superhuman manner, it is necessary that the operations of the gifts be measured by some other norm than that of mere human virtue. This norm is the divine nature itself in which man shares in the measure and manner proper to him; and thus he acts, not merely according to a human mode but as if become God by participation" (*In III Sent.* dist.34, art.3).

The foregoing text is so striking and explicit that it deserves to be quoted in the original: "Cum dona sint ad operandum *supra humanum*

modum, oportet quod donorum operationes mensurentur *ex altera regula* quam sit regula humanae virtutis, quae est ipsa Divinitas ab homine participata suo modo, ut jam, *non humanitus sed quasi DEUS factus participatione,* operetur."

[36] Gal. 2:20.
[37] Luke 1:49.
[38] Luke 24:49.
[39] Matt. 5:6.
[40] Rom. 8:15.
[41] John 4:23.
[42] Cf. I Cor. 15:28.
[43] I Cor. 7:29,31.
[44] Cf. Matt. 5:5.
[45] Ps. 18:2.
[46] Prov. 9:10.
[47] Exod. 3:14.
[48] I Cor. 6:17.
[49] John 17:4.
[50] I Cor. 15:28.
[51] Rom. 11:33.
[52] Matt. 11:25.
[53] Deut. 6:4–5.
[54] Matt. 5:48.
[55] John 15:12.
[56] Matt. 5:48.
[57] I Thess. 4:3.
[58] II Tim. 2:3.
[59] "Vocati sumus *ad militiam Dei vivi* jam tunc cum in sacramenti verba respondemus" (*Ad Martyres,* ch.3,*P.L.* 1,624).
[60] "Spiritus Sanctus, qui super aquas baptismi salutifero descendit illapsu, in fonte plenitudinem tribuit ad innocentiam, in confirmatione augmentum praestat ad gratiam . . . post baptismum confirmamur *ad pugnam.* . . . Roboramur. . . . Confirmatio armat et instruit ad agones mundi hujus et praelia. . . . Victuris necessaria sunt confirmationis auxilia" (Anonymous, 5th cent.).
[61] Part II, The Sacraments: Confirmation; quoted from McHugh and Callan, *op. cit.,* p. 211.
[62] McHugh and Callan, *op. cit.,* p. 199. The Latin of the Catechism of Trent reads: *"Perfectus Christi miles* esse incipit" (ch.xvii,par.1).
[63] "He who is confirmed receives the power to publicly profess in words the faith of Christ, as it were *ex officio"* (*S.T.*,III,72,5,ad 2m).
[64] Rom. 12:5.
[65] Cf. John 10:10.
[66] Letter of Pope Pius XI to the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon, Nov. 10, 1933. The Latin reads in part as follows: "Confirmatione nempe Jesu *Christi milites* efficimur; atque militi cuique non tam pro suo quam pro

ceterorum bono elaborandum pugnandumque esse nemo est qui non videat." These words indicate both the spirit of conquest for Christ (*pro ceterorum bono elaborandum*) and the duty of defending the mystical body (*pugnandumque*).

In this connection we might remark that it would be a highly desirable endeavor if our parish Catholic Action groups sponsored an annual or periodic renewal of the confirmation promises, as is customary in regard to the baptismal promises. Such a ceremony, if well prepared and accompanied by group recitation and various auditory and visual aids at the disposal of the modern apostolate, would be a most stirring reminder of the calling to which the apostle of Christ and the Christian militant worker and soldier is summoned and dedicated.

[67] Matt. 12:30.
[68] Matt. 10:17–20.
[69] John 15:20.
[70] John 16:33.
[71] *S.T.*, III,72,1, ad 4m.
[72] John 1:14, 16.

CHAPTER THREE

The Eucharist: Transformation in Christ

SUMMARY: 1. The Real Presence. . . . 2. Communicating in the Body and Blood of Christ. . . . 3. Communicating in the Soul of Christ. . . . 4. Communicating in the Person of the Word. . . . 5. Communicating in the Blessed Trinity. . . . 6. The Sacrament of Unity. . . . 7. In the Footsteps of the Virgin of the Incarnation.

The Eucharist is the sacrament of our transformation in Christ through love.

THE Eucharist holds the same fundamental position in the spiritual life of Christian souls as the sacrifice of Calvary in the mystery of Jesus. Baptism incorporates us in the Word Incarnate; confirmation gives us increased growth in Him; and the Eucharist completes our transformation in Christ. The sacrament of the Eucharist, which contains in substance the spiritual common good both of the Church militant and triumphant,[1] is, by reason of its twofold character as sacrament and sacrifice, the "source of all graces." [2] Through the sacrament of the Eucharist are imparted to the faithful all the graces of the incarnation and the redemption. Through the sacrifice of the Eucharist, on the other hand, is offered to the most Blessed Trinity the whole cult and worship of the Church militant. Without the Eucharist, the Church on earth would be without Christ.

In the Eucharistic host the entire mystery of Jesus is perpetuated for the purpose of sanctifying souls and glorifying the Father. A true understanding of the Eucharistic mystery is not possible unless it is seen in its relation to the whole program of God's eternal plan and as an extension of the incarnation and the continuation thereof through the centuries. Such is the clas-

sical conception of the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church. Indeed, God the Father did not send His Son to be with us for only a few short years. From the perspective of the Trinity this world of ours, by reason of the incarnation, has become the center of the universe, and Christ continues to be present here among His followers in order to bring His redemptive work to final completion through the medium of His Church. We need but to reflect a moment or two on the mystery of the Incarnation to realize that it is the most sublime reality in the universe, the ultimate end and purpose to which the divine governance of the world is ordained.

Thus, in the mind of God creation is seen not so much in itself as in relation to His Son. Sacred Scripture makes this abundantly clear. It tells us that the Son "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature," [3] "the beginning and the end" [4] of all things on earth, in heaven, and even in hell. Furthermore, "all things have been created through and unto him," [5] both things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominations or principalities or powers.[6] Again, "in him all things hold together. . . . he is the head of his body, the Church; he . . . the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the first place. For it has pleased God the Father that in him all his fullness should dwell, and that through him he should reconcile to himself all things, whether on the earth or in the heavens, making peace through the blood of his cross." [7] In other words, God contemplates the world only through Christ, so that the incarnation of the Word dominates and explains the whole divine plan. Jesus is "the Alpha and the Omega" [8] of all things, the "one Mediator between God and men." [9] It was necessary, therefore, that God in His providence should provide a means of uniting us personally with our Saviour. The economy of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, is such a means, for through the sacraments all the blessings and benefits of the incarnation and the redemption are made available to us.

We see, therefore, that in the Eucharistic host the whole work

of Christ is perpetuated. In it Christ exercises permanently the twofold function of priest-mediator: on the one hand He brings the life of God down to the souls of men, and on the other hand He lifts up souls to God. The coming of the Trinity into the souls of men is effected by Christ through Holy Communion, whereas the return of souls to the bosom of the Father by making them one with the Son is completed through the Sacrifice of the Mass.

I. THE REAL PRESENCE

The saints have always seen clearly, in the light of their deep faith, that beneath the veil of the Eucharistic host the Word Incarnate dwells among us day and night in order to continue through this presence His work of redemption, and to stand always before the Father to make intercession for us. Nothing of this is seen by the senses, and reason itself is surpassed by the mystery. Faith alone tells us what is present, but reason knows that what is of divine faith and divinely revealed is infallibly certain. Regarding the Eucharist the words of Jesus are unmistakably clear: "This is my body, this is my blood." [10]

The Church prescribes that we take these words, not merely in a symbolical sense, but literally, and directs us to believe with all our heart that through the almighty power of God the body, the blood, the soul, and the Godhead of the Word Incarnate are truly present in the reality of their substance.[11] Thus, after the miracle of transubstantiation Christ is present whole and entire, with His body, His blood, His soul, and His divine nature and Person. Moreover, the words of consecration, which bring His body and blood on the altar as victim, also cause to be present, by way of concomitance, the whole reality of the mystery of Jesus as He now exists in the splendor of glory. For "Christ, having risen from the dead, dies now no more." [12] His body and soul remain inseparably and forever united with the Person of the Word, who brings to us the Father and the Spirit through the indivisible unity of the Trinity. The entire mystery of the Word

Incarnate is contained in the Eucharistic host, both the ineffable perfections of His humanity and the infinite grandeur of His divinity, and both veiled by the appearances. As the beautiful hymn *Adoro Te* declares:

In cruce latebat sola Deitas,
At hic latet simul et humanitas.[13]

The Christ of the Eucharist is identical with the Christ of history and of eternity. There are not two Christs—only one. In the host we possess the Christ of all the mysteries of the redemption: the Christ of Mary Magdalene, of the prodigal son, of the Samaritan woman; the Christ of Mount Thabor and Gethsemane; the Christ risen from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father. The Christ whom the Church possesses on earth is the same Christ whom the blessed possess in the beatific vision in heaven. There is only one Church, and only one Christ. It is not another Christ we have, but only another manner of His presence. *Non alius sed aliter.* This identity of the historical Christ with the Eucharistic Christ and the Christ of eternity is strikingly accented in the hymn *Ave verum:*

Ave verum Corpus natum de Maria Virgine,
Vere passum, immolatum in cruce pro homine,
Cujus latus perforatum fluxit aqua et sanguine:
Esto nobis praegustatum mortis in examine.
O Jesu dulcis!
O Jesu pie!
O Jesu fili Mariae! [14]

This marvelous presence of Christ in our midst ought to change our whole life. We have no reason to envy the Apostles and the disciples of Jesus because they were privileged to walk with Him in Judea and Galilee. He is still with us. In every city and village, in every home almost, we have Him as much as they did. The hands of the priest and the lips of the communicants can touch the humanity of Christ. They can touch His flesh that was bruised on the Cross, His nerves and bones that were wracked, His head that had been crowned with thorns, in short,

the whole body which the Word Incarnate offered up on Calvary in expiation for our sins. St. John Chrysostom, in strong, realistic language, urged the faithful to communicate from the very heart of Christ. "Come and quench your thirst," he entreated, "at the wound of His side." In truth, the crucified Christ is still here and awaits us all. The same blood of redemption streams down upon all generations that pass by.

Not only the body but also the soul of Christ is present in the host. His human faculties exercise the same activity in the host as in the state of glory. All the thoughts and aspirations of the Word Incarnate are shared in innermost union with the Father and in union with His Church militant, triumphant, and suffering. The Eucharistic life of Jesus is His life in heaven, a life in the fullness of beatific vision, a life of unceasing love and adoration. This soul of Christ, which is the masterpiece of all creation, continues to be among us, together with its understanding illuminated by the radiance of the Word and its bright vision of the Trinity and of the entire universe. Nothing is outside of Christ's all-comprehensive gaze: neither the world of pure spirits, nor material creation, nor even the least perceptible movement of the souls in heaven, on earth, or in hell. He knows the past, the present, the future, all in the light of the Word and according to the immutable manner of eternity. Unlike us, He never conjectures; He sees. His beatific knowledge is equal in extension to that of the Trinity.[15] He illumines the angels and archangels, all of whom are at His service in the governance of the world.

Christ's Eucharistic life is a life of love. From His heart go out unceasingly to the Father the ardent affections of an infinite charity. The whole inmost life of the priestly soul of the Word Incarnate, its adoration, its prayer, its thanksgiving, its expiation, all is inspired by this limitless love. In the Christ of the host the Trinity finds glory without measure and without end.[16]

Furthermore, the Word with the sovereign power of His divinity and with His uncreated Person is also present in the host. He who is the only-begotten Son in the eternal bosom of

the Father, before whom the thrones and dominations tremble and the seraphim cover themselves with their wings because they cannot bear the radiance of His countenance; He who is the splendor of the glory of God, the figure of His substance, the light of light, the beginning and the end of all things; He who is the priest of men and angels, the Saviour of the world, the true God of the universe—He, too, is present. A divine Person, equal in power, wisdom, and mercy to the other Persons of the Trinity, abides perpetually among us, like one of us, without ceasing to be God. But the complaint of St. John the Baptist might well be addressed to us: "In the midst of you there has stood one whom you do not know." [17] Allowing ourselves to be carried away in the whirlpool of daily affairs, how often do we stop to think that near by just around the corner, so to speak, almost next door to us dwells God the Redeemer, so that the words of St. John the Evangelist are all too true: "He came into his own, and his own received him not"? [18]

But the Word is never alone. The Father and the Holy Spirit always abide with the Word in an eternal "circuminsession." [19] Through a mutual presence the three divine Persons are always together, one in another, in such a way that their indivisible essence is in no way separable. The Father abides in the Son and the Son in the Father, and both are united in one and the same love. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, together and individually, possess each the same divine nature. "Do you not believe," asked Jesus, "that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" [20] And why? Because "I and the Father are one." [21] That is the real reason, the most profound reason.

In the Blessed Trinity all is possessed in common: understanding, love, and happiness without end, in one and the same life shared whole and entire by each of the divine Persons. The Father and the Son find in each other infinite complacences, issuing in the mutual love which consummates their unity. Wherever the Word abides, the Father and the Spirit abide with Him. This whole Trinitarian life is present in the Eucharistic host.

The continuous presence of Jesus with His Church militant until the end of the world is the source of incalculable benefits to us. All the gifts and blessings of the incarnation and the redemption are thereby made unceasingly available to souls in a measure that is proportionate to their eagerness to receive them. In describing the wonderful effects of the Eucharist it is customary to compare them to the effects of bodily nourishment, which is taken as a symbol of the transformation wrought in the soul by the "bread of life." [22] Though sometimes carried too far, this can be a very fruitful method of exposition.

Nevertheless, it should be remembered that our primary attention must always be centered on Him who is the bread of life and on His divine Person, who in all of His dealings with us never ceases to exercise His office of Redeemer. Along with her pre-eminent Doctors the Church has always understood what is the proper place of the Eucharist in the economy of the world's history. She has always regarded it as the application of the incarnation and the redemption to each individual soul, as Christ coming in person into the life of each of us.[23] According to St. Thomas, Christ bestows upon each individual person the same life of grace which He brought to the world by His visible coming.[24] Indeed, if we but had faith as then, the miracles of the gospel could again become daily occurrences. Jesus passing through our midst in an invisible, but not less efficacious manner, would again cure the sick, raise the dead to life, and go about doing good to all. The same cause continues to operate, and the same effects could once more follow. As formerly when the crowds of Palestine touched the hem of His garments, so upon contact with Christ in the host the same great power of redemption would again go forth from Him,[25] and He would again come to us to cure our sorrows and infirmities. The Christ of Tiberias would again rise up majestically to face the waves and calm the tempest of our souls. All men would hearken to the one voice of the Saviour. Christ's invitation to them still stands: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened." [26] No one is excluded. We

have His assurance that "him who comes to me I will not cast out." [27] All that is needed is to approach and allow ourselves to be saved. Christ, the source of life, addressed His clear call to all generations: "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink." [28] Only one condition is laid down: to thirst.

The other sacraments confer a special grace that is clearly defined. Thus, baptism bestows the rebirth in Christ; confirmation effects the spiritual growth which transforms one who is only baptized into a perfect Christian; penance restores the sinner to the life of grace; marriage helps a man and his wife to build a home under the protective watch of Christ; holy orders establishes and continues the hierarchy of the Church; extreme unction prepares the dying to enter upon the vision of God. But the Eucharist is the common, universal source of the graces of redemption until the end of time. In it everyone can find, if he but so desires, all necessary graces, whatever the circumstances of his life; and the Church herself has the assurance that in the Eucharist she has the source of a strength that guarantees her victory in all the various circumstances of her militant life, including the days of Antichrist.

If we wish to make a profound study of the benefits of the Eucharist, the best way is to view them from the perspective of the incarnation, that is, to bear in mind that God became man to make us divine, that the Word was made flesh to make us like unto Himself. Everything about the Eucharist comes down to this fundamental point: that through love, Holy Communion brings about the union which transforms us in Christ.

The principal effect of the Eucharist consists in arousing in the soul fervent acts of love toward Christ; and since it is characteristic of love to transform the one who loves so as to become like his beloved, the Eucharist transforms us into Christ, for it is the sacrament par excellence of friendship with Christ. He comes to us with His personal love, a love that is efficacious, creative, and redeeming. He comes to us as the Saviour of our souls through love for us. It was precisely for the purpose of establishing this

friendship and realizing this "life together" with each of those who are "His" that Christ instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist. His role as all-powerful friend consists in evoking on our part a response to His love. The Eucharist is the food which nourishes this life of intimate fellowship. By producing in the soul all the various effects of a fervent love, the Eucharist transforms us into Christ, so that all the thoughts and aspirations of the Word Incarnate toward His Father and toward men also become ours. It eliminates step by step all attachment to sin; it bestows an increase of grace; and by helping us to progress in every virtue it leads to the highest summits of Christian perfection. The Eucharistic Communion is the supreme moment of our configuration to Christ. It is in the Eucharist that union with God on earth is consummated.

2. COMMUNICATING IN THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

The transformation in Christ which takes place through the Eucharist embraces the whole of human nature. The effects of this transformation are accomplished first in the soul, but through the soul they also reach to the operation of the senses. In this way, through contact with the flesh and blood of Christ, man's whole being is purified; his animal passions no longer dominate his life as he rises above the flesh, above its coarser instincts and desires. From Christ the Virgin he learns how, though in the flesh, to live above the flesh. There are countless young men and women who have thus acquired, and advanced in, the virtue of purity, keeping themselves pure and undefiled. They carry God in their body as in a living temple of the Blessed Trinity. For the love of Christ they persevere in virginal innocence. No one knows this better than the priest. The many confidences that men and women of every walk of life reveal to him give him a sort of empirical verification of the truth that in the world, as in the cloister, the virtue of purity is the marvelous effect of the Eucharist. Indeed, the harmony that the Eucharist

produces in the lower nature of a creature of sin, such as we are, the peace and tranquillity it achieves in the operations of our sense life: this is a victory that comes from the redemptive grace of Christ, a victory which, in part at least, amounts to a sort of restoration of man to the state of innocence.

The Church, therefore, has good reason for recommending Holy Communion to Christians as the principal safeguard of chastity. For the Christ of the Eucharist contains the power to keep the souls of men in the state of virginal purity; and to those who have lost their first innocence He gives the strength and grace to regain the purity that will make them saints. If he approach the Christ of the Magdalene with love and humility, one who may have been defiled by sin but is now repentant will soon find the source of his proneness to sin diminished and eventually extinguished. Christ in His love will help such a one to be cleansed to the point of sharing in His own divine purity. Furthermore, all those who are following the ideal of virginal innocence will find in the Eucharist the strength to keep themselves chaste virgins to be presented to Christ.[29] The priest especially will gain each morning from his Eucharistic contact with Christ the special means of keeping his priesthood immaculate and inviolate. It is clear, then, that purity of body and soul is a triumph of the Eucharistic host.

In addition to the preservation of, and growth in, purity, communicating in the flesh and blood of Christ produces yet another effect, one that is even more wonderful, though not so immediate. Through the Eucharist, in other words, this mortal body of ours receives the seed of immortality. Such, in fact, is the promise of Christ: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life everlasting and I will raise him up on the last day." [30] It is true, as we have said, that the Eucharist produces its first and immediate effects in the soul, and its work of transformation and sanctification in Christ reaches to the inmost depths, to the uttermost being, of the soul. But the body shares in these effects

through the medium of the soul, since the operations of the soul are reflected in the body.

Here on earth the grandeur of our divine sonship lies beyond our immediate vision. But it will not always be thus. St. Paul assures us as follows: "When Christ, your life, shall appear, then you too will appear with him in glory." [31] He declares, furthermore, that the "Lord Jesus Christ . . . will refashion the body of our lowliness, conforming it to the body of his glory." [32] At that supreme moment of our glorious transfiguration, when we shall be conformed to the image of Christ in body and soul, the more fervent our Eucharistic Communions will have been, the more resplendent will be the unfolding of the seed of immortality that was placed in us through this sacramental contact with the Word.

In the Eucharist the body of Christ is given to us under the form of an immolated victim, so that the blood we drink is again shed—sacramentally—for many unto the remission of sin. Thereby the crucified Christ's work of purification and redemption is perpetuated. When the Word Incarnate comes into a sinner, not only his body but—what is more—his soul is made pure and virginal, even, as has been said, to the point of sharing in the very purity which the Word possessed in His being as the Christ. Thus the Eucharist cleanses and delivers the sinner, sometimes completely, of his past sins, of the punishments due his sins, and even of the evil or corruptive inclinations that remain to plague every human being after he has sinned.

Man, of course, is weak, fragile. Engaged as he is in the hard struggles that life imposes, it is almost inevitable, in spite of himself, that he will be found wanting in many details of his life. All around him, as well as within himself, there is so much that ever seeks to turn him from the path of righteousness. There are the manifold and ever-present inclinations that come from self-love. There is our unruly sense nature, and the difficulties engendered by our individual temperaments. There are, too, the thousand and one pitfalls that form part and parcel of present-day exist-

ence, so that we never know when we shall be surprised by this or that occasion of sin, especially since most of us seem to live overburdened and almost constantly under tension. In addition there are the many professional and social activities which require our attention and drain our energies, leaving in their wake sometimes utter physical exhaustion, and sometimes also spiritual anemia—unless, note well, we have learned to bring into our lives the order and unity that comes from love. Daily Communion is a most excellent antidote to such spiritual dissipation as we may be exposed to. In performing our daily round of activities there is always the danger that God will be shoved aside and cease to be the focal point of our thoughts and desires; but if we begin the day with a fervent Communion, we shall be ready to meet the challenge.

Accordingly, whether we find ourselves distracted by the many occupations and preoccupations of life, whether our eagerness for God has been stifled by indiscreet and sinful attachments, or whether we have simply been overcome by temptation, in any case through union with Christ we can always regain the strength to free ourselves from any and all entanglements of venial sin that may be hampering our spiritual advance. The fact is that even though the soul may be resolved never, under any condition, to consent to mortal sin, it may yet be attached to creatures in varying degrees, without turning completely away from God. Thus it lingers on the way, for venial sin is not an outright turning back from God, but an interruption in the upward march of the soul to the Blessed Trinity. Indeed, despite the outpourings of love from his lips, in this life man is never utterly and entirely conformed to Christ, and there is none on earth who can boast that he has attained that degree of perfection which God found in Christ or in the Blessed Virgin—and only in them. The saints themselves were not without those shortcomings and weaknesses of which St. Thérèse of Lisieux said, in her captivating manner, that they are not such as to cause the good Lord any grief or pain. But even though the saints found their will subject to such

failures of weakness, they did not accept them with full deliberation or full consent. The saints meant it when they said that they would die rather than give deliberate consent to the least venial sin.[33]

But even the soul that may have deliberately permitted itself to become entangled in venial sins need not despair of regaining perfect purity and innocence; it can do so by receiving Christ in Holy Communion, provided that it is sincerely repentant and determined to be faithful in the love of Christ from now on. Through the blood of Christ the soul is not only cleansed from all stain of sin but also, in proportion to the fervor of its love of Christ at the time of Communion, freed from the punishments due its past sins. Thus, because of the importance of one's disposition, at least at Communion time one should make every possible effort to achieve nothing less than the disposition of a saint.

Such is the mind of the Church. Approached with the proper disposition, the Eucharist becomes the remedy par excellence against our daily faults, against those little acts of meanness and selfishness which, while not completely destroying the life of grace in the soul, nevertheless gradually weaken and diminish it. If we allow such faults to take their course unchecked, we run the risk of falling from the state of grace into the state of sin, not abruptly, but little by little, almost imperceptibly, through the progressive encroachments of such evil tendencies upon the supernatural life of the soul. Fervent Communion is the corrective to this condition. It is like an upward thrust to the soul, carrying it aloft to Christ. The moment that a man, resolutely and definitively, turns his back on those endless concessions to a self-love that is not only insatiable but often wears the mask of virtue, he has taken the decisive step in establishing his life firmly in Christ, all else being utterly and unconditionally renounced. It was in this spirit that Lacordaire could say that, once he learned to know and appreciate Jesus Christ, nothing seemed to him beautiful enough to be worth desiring. Holy Communion, then, is the most

effective means to safeguard the soul from all evil, to sustain its fervor, and to bring it to the most heroic heights of sanctity.

As poor sinners, we know only too well that human nature left to itself is subject to untold weaknesses. Holy Communion is not only a means of purifying the soul from those daily faults that will inevitably arise, but it is also a source of unrivaled strength that will permit the soul to face the hard struggles of life. This aspect of Holy Communion, namely, its being nourishment to the soul, has always been stressed in the Christian tradition. Ecclesiastical writers of every age never weary of comparing the effects of Communion in the soul to the effects of nourishment in the body. This is not surprising, since the entire discourse of Jesus on the bread of life is an obvious invitation to turn our thoughts in that direction. "I am the living bread that has come down from heaven," said Jesus.[34] "If anyone eat of this bread he shall live forever." [35] Such is the reason why we have access to the flesh of the Son of Man, namely, so that it may revive our failing strength and energies; yes, not only revive but also sustain and increase our strength and bring us to possess the joy of Christ.

Thus, the Eucharistic bread restores the soul to spiritual health and vigor, causing it to grow in its union with Christ and in the practice of all virtues, both theological and cardinal. It also serves as viaticum whereby the soul is strengthened for its journey through life, ending in eternal life in God hereafter, even as the Prophet Elias, having been miraculously strengthened in the desert by food provided by God, walked forty days and forty nights to Mount Horeb, where the vision of the eternal God awaited him.[36] In a similar way the Eucharistic host is man's daily bread which gives him the strength to face and overcome all difficulties in life. What this means is that in the struggles of life the Christian is not left to himself; as he advances day by day on his journey to God, Christ with His strength and support is ever at his side.

Furthermore, the sacrificial symbolism of the Eucharist indicates that we ought to approach Christ on the altar as we would Christ on the Cross; for this sacrament is also a sacrifice. In partaking of the Eucharist, we are communicating in Him who was crucified. Such, in fact, is the most profound meaning of the Eucharistic Communion; it means that we are united with the Christ of Calvary, united with Him in the very act whereby He offered Himself to His Father for our redemption. Thus, while baptism and the other sacraments permit us to share in the benefits of Christ's Passion, the Eucharist goes beyond the other sacraments by completing our union with the crucified Christ.[37] Hence its unique efficacy in promoting in the soul of a Christian the spirit of sacrifice, which is the quintessence of the gospel. It was none other than Jesus Christ who said, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." [38]

It is well to remember that so long as a soul has not suffered, it lives only on the surface; the deeper realities escape its grasp. In the mystery of Christ lie hidden depths of divine reality which only those can reach and penetrate who, like Christ, have each in his own way been crucified. Authentic holiness is always consummated on a cross. Many Christians complain that their Communions leave them lukewarm, that they seem to derive such small fruit from this sacramental contact with Christ. Could it be that they have forgotten what it is that really and truly constitutes preparation for Communion? Our preparation leaves much to be desired if it consists in nothing more than the attempt to elicit, often in haste and unsuccessfully, a few simple acts of love just as we are about to approach the Communion rail. The way to find admittance into the mystery of Christ is by actual participation in His sufferings. That is the secret formula, so to speak, for living a life of love in communion with Christ: namely, to be a victim with the Victim, each morning to bring to the chalice of redemption a drop of our own blood.

3. COMMUNICATING IN THE SOUL OF CHRIST

Communicating in the body and blood of the Saviour should lead to a life of intimate union with the soul of Christ. If, as so often happens, the experience of coming under the influence of the soul of a saint is enough to change one's whole life, how much more is it to be expected that this intimate and perhaps daily sacramental contact with Christ should lift us up to the plane of His own divine life and thereby impart to the soul while yet on earth the beginnings of eternal life in Him! In Christ dwell the fullness of the Godhead and all the riches and merits of the redemption. This same Christ it is that comes to us each day, in the hope and desire of enriching us with the infinite treasures of His grace of headship. In this way His own glory as well as our salvation is served in the highest degree. For, as Jesus Himself remarked, in this is the Father glorified, namely, that we bear very much fruit and become saints.[29]

As long as the Church militant will endure, so long will Jesus be with us as the source from which flow unceasingly the graces of salvation. His heart will ever be open to all generations, waiting to quench their thirst of soul with His blood of redemption. His divine Spirit will never cease to exert His guiding influence over each of our lives, ready at every moment to enlighten our understanding, to enkindle in our hearts the fire of His love, and to arouse in our souls the thoughts and affections that are found in Christ's own soul. Thus, the Word dwells among us so that we may be one with Christ and with all the movements and aspirations of His soul. Christ's purpose in sanctifying us through grace is to permit us to share in the divine love and the divine understanding of His own soul, and to bring us, through Him and with Him and in Him, into intimate union and fellowship with the Father.

This close union with the soul of Christ permits our understanding to share in the divine light which He enjoys in the presence of the Father's countenance, amid the multitude of

angels and saints. We do not yet possess the beatific vision, as does Christ, but we receive an ever greater participation in the beatific illuminations of His soul. Through the operations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit our faith grows in understanding, so that more and more we see and appraise all things in the light of Christ's own understanding. Many there are, and have been, who know from experience this supernatural working of Christ in the soul. Who, for instance, can count the inspirations which Doctors of the Church have received from the Word through their Eucharistic Communions? Not one of them who could not testify that often, even after long hours of deep thought and study, his understanding would still be groping, trying without cease, but in vain, to comprehend. Then, suddenly, when in the presence of the Word before the tabernacle or in Holy Communion, he received such luminous insight regarding sacred truth as almost to blind his intellectual vision by the depth and intensity of the supernatural light vouchsafed him. One legend, for example, depicts the brilliant St. Thomas as leaning his brow against the door of the tabernacle, imploring Christ for understanding. In fact, if Christian hagiography teaches us anything at all, it is that the highest graces of understanding always come to souls through the Eucharist. Doctors and teachers of the Church, men and women dedicated to the active life, persons of humble occupations, individuals from among the nameless multitude of the faithful—in all walks of life, how many there have been who received the decisive inspiration of their lives in a fervent Communion!

And why not? He who from all eternity dwells in the bosom of the Father and knows all mysteries of God is there in Holy Communion, intimately present and always disposed, if we but will it, to open to us the mysteries of creation and the mysteries of that inmost life of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of God who dwells infinitely above us in light impenetrable and inaccessible. Christ is present, and never more so than in Holy Communion, to enlighten and illumine the soul with the divine

light that irradiates His own soul. Ours is but to have the wisdom to be still and recollected in His presence.

As a matter of fact, our divine Lord, who left to His disciples the precept of the love of God and the brotherly love of neighbor as the résumé of all His teachings, could hardly have failed to exemplify in Himself the basic principle of all true friendship, namely, the desire to live always together. Love simply feels the need of presence. It was to make possible this living among us while we await our entrance into heaven that the Son of God instituted the Eucharist.[40] In the Eucharist He abides permanently among us so that even now we may be united with Him in love. We understand, therefore, why the last admonitions of Jesus to His disciples, the last will and testament, so to speak, of the love for them that was in His heart, should have centered around this living together with Him in love and friendship. This is the meaning of such expressions as "Abide in me, and I in you," "Abide in my love," and "You are my friends. . . . No longer do I call you servants. . . . but I have called you friends." [41]

Through Holy Communion, then, a deep friendship is established between Christ and the faithful soul. No longer need we hesitate to entrust our personal interests and the conduct of our whole life into His hands. Jesus, in turn, grants the soul the gift of sharing in His life and His love, the gift of being united with Him in His single purpose, namely, to glorify the Father. Such is the aim of this meeting of the soul with the soul of Christ: to unite us with Him, to make His thought and His love our thought and our love, to join our will to His will, which is to realize completely the redemption of the world. This is what our friendship with Christ accomplishes; it effects the identification of our will with His. Through sacramental contact with Christ we learn to forsake all else, and like Him to be solicitous only for His "Father's business." [42] Thus comes about, through love, the complete transformation of man in Christ, that transformation of which St. Paul spoke in his celebrated declaration that "It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me." [43]

Through the Eucharist, moreover, we receive the grace to share in all the virtues of Christ's soul. Through faith we share in the light that illuminates His soul, and through charity we participate in His love. But we also share in His purity and holiness, in His prudence, in His strength and fortitude of soul, and in all the sentiments of filial love and devotion toward His Father. In Him we find, as in their common source, the power to exercise all Christian virtues. The same grace of holiness flows from the head to the members, so that the whole mystical body is vivified by one and the same movement of supernatural life. Under the impulse of this mysterious presence, which is not less real for being hidden, the soul advances in the task of self-effacement. Step by step it learns to substitute the inmost thoughts and desires of Christ's soul for its own. In due time it is transformed in Christ, so that Christ becomes its all. Its fortitude, its purity, its counsel, its adoration, its prayer, its expiation, its thanksgiving—all are through and from Christ. Christ is, then, the constant source and principle of its every action, and the grace that transforms into Christ achieves its fullness of growth. At this degree of transformation the life of a faithful soul is like a glowing light in which the life of Jesus is mirrored. Each of its actions then is a manifestation of Christ. Such is the effect of the Eucharistic Communion as expressed by Jesus Himself: "As the living Father has sent me, and as I live because of the Father, so he who eats me, he also shall live because of me." [44] Even as the Son receives all from His Father in the depths of His divine nature, so does the Christian who lives by Communion live only in Christ. His soul and Christ's soul are, so to speak, no longer two, but one.

4. COMMUNICATING IN THE PERSON OF THE WORD

The human nature of Christ points the way to the divine nature of the Word. In Jesus, God and man are united so as to be, in a most profound sense, one. This is a basic element of our faith, and we must always heed the admonition repeated so often

by St. Cyril, the great Doctor of the Incarnation and the Divine Motherhood, namely: "Do not divide Christ." The Word Incarnate is more "one," more a unity, than man in his human nature. In Jesus, body, soul, and divine nature subsist in the eminent simplicity of one divine Person. In the Eucharist, also, Christ remains indivisible, and through the merits of Christ's sacred wounds and crucifixion, we are privileged to be partakers of the Word and of His divine life. For twenty centuries now the Son of God has dwelled among men, the Son of God in whom the Father finds His infinite delight, and the blessed an eternity of happiness. In the Eucharistic host the Word Incarnate is as substantially present as He was present among the Apostles and the crowds of Palestine, present with the infinite fullness of His grace of headship, which has only to overflow into the souls of men to transform them in Him. What we need is to approach this Saviour, the Word, with the faith of the meek and the humble of the gospel, who crowded around Christ to touch merely the fringe of His garments, and came back healed.

It was in this spirit of deep faith that St. Thomas Aquinas approached the Eucharist. The following is the sublime prayer he offered to Christ in His hidden presence in the host: "Almighty and eternal God, I come to the sacrament of Thine only-begotten Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as one sick coming to a physician who will save his life. I hasten to the source of mercy. Being blind, I come to Him who is eternal light. Poor and needy, I appear before the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. I beseech Thee, in Thy infinite goodness, to heal my afflictions, to cleanse my defilement, to enlighten the darkness of my mind, to repair my wretchedness, to clothe my nakedness. Dearest Lord, grant that I may receive the body of Thine only Son, born of the Virgin, with such fervor as to be intimately united with Him and to be numbered among the members of His mystical body." Such is the disposition of soul with which the saints approached the Eucharistic mystery. Through the eyes of faith they saw in the host the Christ of the Redemption, the only-begotten Son of the

Father, the Word Incarnate, always present among men on earth, so that He might save them.

We should not be disturbed by what the senses do, and do not, reveal about the Eucharist, any more than St. Paul allowed his understanding to be embarrassed by the spectacle of a Christ who had emptied Himself.[45] By faith he recognized this same Christ as none other than the true Son of God, coequal with the Father, and together with Him the Creator of all things visible and invisible, the "one Mediator between God and man." [46] In the God of the Eucharist the Church militant possesses, really and truly, the second Person of the most Blessed Trinity, and every one who believes in Him has at his disposal the infinite riches and merits of His divine Person. It is for this reason that the "Word was made flesh," [47] namely, to dwell among us and to make us partakers, by grace, of His divine nature. He came to, and for, the whole world; indeed, He would have come for the least one of us. St. Paul believed this truth with all the ardor of his faith; it is, in fact, the foundation of his entire mystical doctrine, as appears, for example, in the following words: "And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me." [48] Yes, He would have come for me alone. According to God's plan of the economy of redemption the Eucharist was precisely to be the providential means chosen by the Word to come into the life of each of us and to abide personally with each of us. Clearly, then, Holy Communion brings Christ whole and entire to each of our souls. Clearly, also, we can never strive enough to appreciate this tremendous truth as it deserves, and never do enough to achieve the highest possible degree of participation in the life of the Word.

5. COMMUNICATING IN THE BLESSED TRINITY

It is Christ's mission to lead us to the Father. Such, too, is the ultimate purpose of the Eucharist. Through the Eucharist, in

other words, we are to become partakers not only of the body and blood of Christ but also of the supernatural life of the Blessed Trinity. The divine life of the Trinity, which has its source in the bosom of the Father and was communicated to the world through the Incarnation, is sustained and advanced in the soul through the Eucharist. When the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son into the world.[49] But God has continued ever since to send His Son to each of us, and the whole meaning and purpose of the Christian life consists in receiving Christ from the hands of the Father.

However, even as the whole Trinity came to us through the incarnation of the Word, so in the Christ of the Eucharistic host it is again the whole Trinity that comes down to us. Jesus Himself said as much: "Amen, amen, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." [50] In sending His Son to us, the Father always comes with Him, and the Spirit accompanies Them both. All three divine Persons come to us to make us partakers, through grace, of Their inmost life and to make our union with Them complete. Thus, the work of rendering the soul divine through grace, which is begun in baptism and carried on by the fullness of the grace of confirmation, is culminated in the Eucharist. It is in the Eucharist, therefore, that the union of the soul with God is perfected through the complete transformation of the soul in Christ.

Having been made one with the only-begotten Son through the Eucharistic Communion, we may, then, go to the Father with the same disposition of filial love and affection as the Son. For in Communion the grace of adoption is brought to its perfect fulfillment, and we are given abiding habitation in the inmost life of the Father, sharing with Jesus all the thoughts and affections of His soul. Then, without benefit of miracle or ecstasy, the transforming union between the soul and Christ is effected. Together with Christ the soul has access to the Father through the

same Spirit that dwells in both. In the uttermost depths of the Trinity Christ and the soul share the same life. Such is the deeper meaning of Christ's words: "As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you." [51] And of the words: "The Father himself loves you." [52] And the Spirit who proceeds from the Father, He, too, is a Spirit of love.

Thus, we share in the life of all three divine Persons. The life of the Father comes to us in virtue of the grace of adoption, mentioned a moment ago; and this grace increases and unfolds with every Communion. The life of the Word is received with a fullness that is constantly enlarged through the illuminations of faith and the workings of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In this way we are brought to share in the thought-life of God's own mind. More and more, also, we share in the life of the Holy Spirit, in proportion to our growth in love. Thus we see that the whole life of the Blessed Trinity becomes our life, in the measure that our love and our fervor make us worthy to be made holy and divine by grace. All this is brought about through Christ. In transforming us in Him, He unites us with God.

Accordingly, pursuant to the laws of nature and of grace, in communicating in Christ we go from His body and blood to His soul and uncreated divine Person, from His human nature to His divine nature, from the incarnation and the Eucharist to the very being of the Trinity, so that having intimate fellowship with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, we may abide in the eternal life of the Trinity and be perfected in God in unity.[53] This is as we should expect. For this is the mission of Christ, namely, to gather up all things to His Father, and to offer to Him all the members of His mystical body joined to Him in unity.

6. THE SACRAMENT OF UNITY

It is not merely as isolated individuals that we are personally sanctified and advance along the road that is to bring us face to

face with God. The salvation of a soul is in some way a corporate salvation; it is bound up with the redemption and salvation of the world. We must remember that our abode is in Christ, that is to say, in a living Person whose scope of activity is as vast and far-reaching as God's plan of salvation. By this plan we are joined together with all men, with all angels, and, through Christ, with the Blessed Trinity Itself. The Eucharist is the sacrament of unity in the Church, the means par excellence of uniting all men with the divine Persons of the Trinity, as well as the means of uniting all races and all civilizations in the unity of Christendom. In meeting Christ, therefore, men meet one another; together they are lifted up through union with God. The first Christian communities clearly understood that in the "cup of the Lord," [54] and in the breaking of bread,[55] lay the secret of forming "one heart and one soul" [56] in Christ.

It is for two reasons that the Eucharist is the pre-eminent sacrament of Christian unity. First, because of its symbolism, which is so full of meaning. For, even as many ears of wheat, when harvested and milled, all make a single loaf of bread, and as many bunches of grapes, when pressed, all yield a single measure of wine, so, in a way, do all Christians of all races and all nations form but a single Church, possessing a catholicity that is truly magnificent.

The much deeper reason, however, why the Eucharist is the sacrament of unity in the Church is that it is the sacrament in which the whole mystical body communicates in one and the same Christ; and Christ is the ultimate ground on which the unity of the Church rests. At the Holy Sacrifice all communicants are united, made one, in Christ. They have the same thoughts and the same wishes and desires as their Lord. Henceforth, they want to work with Him and in Him to promote the growth of Christianity. It is one and the same Christ that is the living bond between all Churches of the Catholic world. This unity of the Christian world is brought about by the God of the Eucharist.[57] Furthermore, as viaticum of the Church militant, the Eucharist

brings souls to the unity of the City of God, which has its supreme archetype as well as its final consummation in the unity of the Trinity. For this unity Jesus prayed His Father, "that they may be one, even as we are one." [58]

7. IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE VIRGIN OF THE INCARNATION

There is one whom the Christian tradition has always regarded as the highest ideal, the incomparable model of every soul seeking to advance in its life of union with the God of the Eucharist. This is the Virgin of the Incarnation, whose life was one of uninterrupted union with the mystery of Christ. In her there was never any stain or defilement, never even a trace of evil. She is immaculate. In her virginal life all was pure; her love was preserved whole and intact for God alone. Neither in her body nor in her soul, which were both wholly consecrated to the service of God and the redemption of the world, did the Word meet with any obstacle to His supernatural operation; for He, the living God, dwelled in her, becoming even her Son in the flesh. In her His divine work of sanctification could go on freely, unhampered. In every soul this supernatural work needs only to be allowed to operate freely in order to produce its effects; and in Mary it found full freedom of operation. During the nine months of real and physical presence in her womb, the Son of God produced in her soul, in a supra-sacramental manner, the most exalted and the most wonderful effects of His grace. In Mary, therefore, the usual effects of the Eucharist were infinitely surpassed.

At the very moment of His coming into the Virgin of the Incarnation, the Word bestowed on her the grace of divine motherhood. Through this singular prerogative the whole mystery of Mary was brought to share, in a most profound manner, in the hiddenmost life of the Trinity, since it gave her a son who was the true Son of the eternal God Himself. To this initial privilege (initial, not in the order of time, since the Immaculate Conception had preceded it, but in the order of excellence)—to this

privilege, which is the foundation and *raison d'être* for all of Mary's glories, were added all the graces which the Virgin of the Incarnation needed to be a worthy Mother of God and of men. The fact of the Word being present in her as her Son became the dominant influence in the whole mystery of her life. Mary became the first beneficiary of the universal restoration and reconstruction that was wrought by the presence in the world of the Word made flesh. Her whole life was transformed by this presence. Furthermore, the God of the Crib and of the Eucharist, from whom men and women receive the power to remain steadfast in purity, did not violate her virginal integrity, but rather consecrated it forever, so that for all generations the Mother of Jesus will retain, above all, her beautiful title of "Virgin." Moreover, death itself spared from its customary ravages the immaculate body of this woman who was the Mother of the Word. It is generally believed that her body was promptly restored to life and assumed into heaven, where now her whole being, body and soul, are in the state of glory forever.[59]

Through the power of the blood of redemption, which the Word took from her virginal body, Mary received all those supernatural gifts and endowments that made her the masterwork, the most wonderful effect, of the redemption. And as for the union of soul, of heart and mind, that existed between the Mother and the Son from the first moment of the incarnation, human understanding may try to fathom it, but must ever stop short of the reality. We do know that the Blessed Trinity made them partners in one and the same work of salvation. With the new Adam, God associated a new Eve, whose coredemptive and maternal action extends over the whole mystical body, reaching as far, if not so deep, as the power of Christ Himself. Indeed, God the Father, having given her His own Son to be her Son, would hardly have failed to give her all the rest: having given her the greater, He would surely not withhold the lesser. And the Holy Spirit, having produced in her the greatest of miracles, also

bestowed on her, in measureless abundance, the fullness of His gifts. And the Word, who dwelled in her as Son, the source and creator of all graces, imparted to her, from His infinite and all-powerful bounty, a store of supernatural riches and merits to which it is impossible for us to affix any limits.

As for the further life of Mary after the incarnation, it, too, was one of uninterrupted union and communion with the entire mystery of Christ. The Virgin of the Incarnation, associated once and for all with the redemptive work of the Word made flesh, remained intimately united with Him in all the mysteries of our salvation. Bethlehem, Nazareth, His public life, His suffering culminating in death on Calvary—all were so many stages in Mary's own life; each found her more and more united and identified with the thoughts and aspirations of Christ's own soul.

The return of Jesus to heaven ended abruptly for Mary the visible presence both of the human and the divine nature of her Son. But the effect of this departure was not to halt the progress of her life of union with Christ; rather it made this union more divine, more pure, by removing all that was perceptible by sense. It was now that the life of faith reached its highest perfection in the soul of the Virgin of the Incarnation. Now the Eucharist played the dominant role in her life, bringing to her, in a real though different manner, the same Son, the same God. Together with the small but growing body of first Christians, the Mother of Jesus continued steadfastly in prayer and in the breaking of bread, communicating with other believers in the body and blood, in the soul and divine nature, of her own Son.

In receiving the body and blood of Jesus in the Eucharist Mary relived all the joys of the incarnation; but each Communion also brought back the poignant memory of her Son's sorrowful immolation on Calvary. For in the Eucharist she, like all Christians, shared in the sacrificial offering of a victim. In fact, the blood of redemption which was in the chalice and which Jesus received from her own blood she had already offered to the Blessed Trinity at the foot of the Cross. Hence, in the Christ

of the Mass and of her Eucharistic Communions, Mary could discern as none other could, the Christ that was contained in all the mysteries associated with the redemption.

It is impossible for us to penetrate the depth and intensity of the union of soul experienced between the Mother and the Son through the Eucharist. Even the initial grace which Mary received with the inaugural of her divine motherhood surpassed in fullness the sum total of all graces bestowed on all the angels and saints. But now she had advanced far beyond the first degrees of holiness and merit that marked the beginning of each of her mysteries. Through her divine motherhood the Virgin of the Incarnation had been raised aloft to the very confines of the Deity, to occupy a place within the realm of the hypostatic order. As we know, through the Person of the Son this order is substantially united with the hiddenmost life of the Blessed Trinity. Furthermore, in virtue of her role on Calvary, Mary's participation in this divine life was extended in scope so as to include participation in the universal redemption of all mankind through Christ.

Now, at the end of her life on earth, the spiritual and mystical life of the Mother of God reached its point of culmination. Her love of God had reached such intensity and such a degree of utter selflessness as to be beyond the power of a creature to understand, let alone to express in words. Here we can only guess and vaguely surmise; but even the little that we can grasp is enough to fill us with awe and wonder. For example, each of her Communions brought her a fullness of grace without equal, a fullness with which no other saint's holiness can even remotely compare. We shall, indeed, never understand Christ's Mother at all, unless we view her from the perspective of Christ Himself; for she was associated with Him in all His work. Her faith was so full and complete and so blessed with light and understanding by the gifts of the Holy Spirit that she could already, though still on earth, glimpse the bright visions of the beatific life. Through the virtue of hope she possessed her soul in peace and joy—joy in

the certain knowledge that by reason of her unique association with Christ a whole spiritual universe, as vast in scope as redemption itself, was receiving from her the birth unto new life, the divine life of grace.

But it was her love, especially her love, that exceeded all bounds, for now it had brought her to those summits of the transforming union beyond which no mere creature can go, summits which only the soul of Christ could exceed. Her whole life was centered in the Eucharistic sacrifice: her love, her atonement, her adoration, her prayer, her thanksgiving. By her merits and her power of reparation she supported and strengthened the disciples of Jesus in their apostolic labors, and the martyrs in their sufferings, and the entire Church in her struggle for the cause of Christ. If the infant Church displayed such irresistible power of conquest, and such unyielding fidelity to God in the face of the most frightful tortures and agonies that marked the first persecutions, it was due to the prayer and the quiet but unfailing influence of the Coredemptress of the world, who herself drew all her strength from the Eucharist, from this real and ever efficacious presence of Christ in the midst of His faithful. When the Mother of God gathered with the growing body of faithful, who were all her children and partook of the body and blood of her Son, her soul became one with the Word Incarnate, one with all His thoughts and aspirations; and through the merits and power of this union, through Him and in Him she nurtured the Church into the fullness of unity in the Trinity.

Notes to Chapter Three

[1] "The common spiritual good of the whole Church is substantially present in the sacrament itself of the Eucharist" (*S.T.*, III,65,3,ad 1m).

[2] Thus the Catechism of the Council of Trent declares: "The Holy Eucharist is truly and necessarily to be called the fountain of all graces, containing, as it does, after an admirable manner, the fountain itself of

celestial gifts and graces, and the author of all the Sacraments, Christ our Lord, from whom, as from its source, is derived whatever of goodness and perfection the other Sacraments possess" (Part II, The Sacraments: The Eucharist; quoted from McHugh and Callan, *op. cit.,* p. 242).

[3] Col. 1:15.

[4] Apoc. 22:13.

[5] Col. 1:16.

[6] Cf. Col. 1:16.

[7] Col. 1:17–20.

[8] Apoc. 22:13.

[9] I Tim. 2:5.

[10] Cf. Matt. 26:26–28.

[11] The Council of Trent defined the dogma of the Real Presence as follows: "The Holy Council declares openly and unequivocally that in the bountiful sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is present: truly, really, and substantially, under the appearance of those same sensible things. Moreover, it is not contradictory that the same Lord and Saviour should be always present in heaven at the right hand of the Father according to His natural manner of existence, and that His substance should be sacramentally present to us in many different places according to the manner of existence which we can hardly express in words but which, through reason enlightened by faith, we can know is possible to God and must most firmly believe" (Sess.xiii, cap.1).

The Council also stated: "If anyone deny that in the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist are present, truly and substantially, the body and blood together with the soul and the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is to say, Christ whole and entire, but says that He is present merely in sign or figure or power: let him be anathema" (Sess.xiii,Can.1).

[12] Rom. 6:9.

[13] In English:

> "On the Cross was hid His divine nature only,
> But here lies veiled His human nature too."
> —Translator's adaptation.

In further clarifying the manner of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, the Council of Trent stated: "After the consecration there are present the true body of our Lord, and His true blood, under the appearances of bread and wine, together with His soul and His divine nature. However, by the power of the words (*ex vi verborum*) the body is present under the appearance of bread, and the blood under the appearance of wine; but by way of concomitance and by reason of the natural connection between the integral parts of our Lord (*vi naturalis illius connexionis et concomitantiae*), the body is also present under the appearance of wine, and the blood under the appearance of bread, and His soul under both . . . as well as His divine nature by reason of its wondrous hypostatic union with His body and soul" (Sess.xiii, cap.3).

Accordingly, pursuant to the principles of human psychology and the theology of the Incarnation and the Trinity, we can establish the following modes of the real presence of the integral Christ by way of concomitance:

a) By way of *psychological concomitance,* that is, in virtue of the substantial union between the human body and soul, there is the inseparableness of the body and soul of the risen Christ (hence, also, of all His human powers of sense, of understanding, and will).

b) By way of *concomitance of the hypostatic union,* there is the inseparableness of the human nature of Christ with the divine nature of the Word, both united in one Person.

c) By way of *concomitance of the Trinitarian "circuminsession"* (cf. note 19, p. 123), there is the inseparableness of the Person of the Word with the two other divine Persons in the absolute identity of one and the same nature.

Thus, the Eucharistic presence of Jesus causes the whole Trinity to be present to us.

[14] "Hail to Thee, true Body born
From the Virgin Mary's womb!
Thou that on the Cross for man
Didst truly suffer and was slain!
Deign that Thee we may foretaste
In our life's last agony.
O kind Jesus!
O loving Jesus!
O Thou, good Jesus, Mary's Son!"
—Translator's adaptation.

[15] The beatific knowledge of the Eucharistic Christ, equal in extension to the so-called "knowledge of vision" of the Trinity, is infinitely outdone by the depth and clarity with which God knows the same things. Furthermore, the divine knowledge, which theologians call the "knowledge of simple understanding," extends to a countless multitude of possible beings of which even the human soul of Christ cannot have an inkling. Cf. *S.T.*, III,10,2c and ad 3m.

[16] The dogma of the real presence of the integral Christ in the Eucharist, which has become the point of departure for theological study and reflection, permits us to state for certain that the *body* of Christ is present with all its intrinsic properties (St. Thomas writes: "Those accidents of Christ's body which are intrinsic to it are present in this sacrament," *S.T.*,III,76,5,ad 2m), and that the *soul* of Christ is present with all its inmost operations of sense, understanding, and will. Only excluded are those external relations pertaining to the order of space, time, and quantity, since Christ is present in the manner of a substance, not in the manner of a quantity localized in space.

St. Thomas explains this point as follows: "All that belongs to Christ, as He is in Himself, can be attributed to Him both in His proper species, and as He exists in the sacrament: such as to live, to die, to grieve, to be

animate or inanimate, and the like; while all that belongs to Him in relation to outward bodies, can be attributed to Him as He exists in His proper species, but not as He is in this sacrament: such as to be mocked, to be spat upon, to be crucified, to be scourged, and the rest" (*S.T.*, III,81,4c; Dom. Trans.).

[17] John 1:26.

[18] John 1:11.

[19] "Circuminsession" is the mutual coexistence and mutual co-indwelling of the three divine Persons, the Father dwelling in the Son, the Son in the Father, both in the Spirit, and the Spirit likewise in the Father and Son. According to theologians, circuminsession denotes three things: a) identity of nature, b) distinction of person, and c) an unbroken course and cycle of life among the divine Persons, so that the Son, proceeding from the Father, returns to and dwells in the bosom of the Father, and the Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, returns to and dwells within both. —Translator's note.

[20] John 14:11.

[21] John 10:30.

[22] John 6:35.

[23] In his splendid encyclical on the Eucharist (*Mirae Caritatis,* May 28, 1902) Pope Leo XIII expressly indicated the point of view to be adopted in order to determine the true place of the Eucharist in the life of the Church. "As is attested by the saintly Fathers of the Church," wrote the Pope, "the Eucharist is to be regarded as a certain *continuation* and enlargement of the Incarnation, inasmuch as through it the substance of the Word Incarnate is imparted to each *individual,* and the supreme sacrifice of Calvary is renewed in wondrous manner."

[24] St. Thomas emphatically states that the effects of the Eucharist must be understood, first and foremost, from the consideration of the real presence of Him who is contained in it; that is, the effects consist, first, in Christ's imparting to the communicant the life of grace that He brought into the world by His visible coming and, secondly, in the sacramental sacrifice producing in each individual the same effects that were produced in the world by the Passion of Christ. In the words of St. Thomas: "The effect of this sacrament ought to be considered, first of all and principally, from what is contained in this sacrament, which is Christ; who, just as by coming into the world, He visibly bestowed the life of grace upon the world, according to John, 1,17: 'Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ,' so also, by coming sacramentally into men, causes the life of grace, according to John, 6,58: 'He who eats me, he also shall live because of me.' . . . Secondly, it is considered on the part of what is represented by this sacrament, which is Christ's Passion. . . . And therefore this sacrament works in man the effect Christ's Passion wrought in the world" (*S.T.* III,79,1c; Dom. Trans.).

[25] Cf. Luke 8:46.

[26] Matt. 11:28.

[27] John 6:37.
[28] John 7:37.
[29] Cf. II Cor. 11:2.
[30] John 6:55.
[31] Col. 3:4.
[32] Phil. 3:21.
[33] It is precisely in regard to the effects of the Eucharist that St. Thomas, who was both a great doctor and a great saint, teaches that on earth even the most perfect souls cannot altogether escape all indeliberate venial faults. In reply to the objection that St. John (I.1:8) says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," St. Thomas remarks: "The passage quoted is not to be understood in the sense that a man cannot be without all guilt of venial sin for a time, but that the just do not go through life without venial sins" (*S.T.*,III,79,4,ad 2m).
[34] John 6:51.
[35] John 6:52.
[36] Cf. I Kings 19:8.
[37] St. Thomas writes: "The Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ's Passion inasmuch as a man is made perfect in union with Christ as having suffered" (*S.T.*,III,73,3,ad 3m).
[38] Luke 9:23.
[39] Cf. John 15:8.
[40] "Because it is the special feature of friendship to live together with friends, as the Philosopher says, IX *Ethics* (Lesson 14), Christ promises us His bodily presence as a reward. . . . Yet *meanwhile* in our pilgrimage He does not deprive us of His bodily presence; but unites us with Himself in this sacrament through the truth (reality) of His body and blood. Hence he says, John, 6,57: 'He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, abides in me and I in him.' Hence this sacrament is the sign of supreme charity, and the uplifter of our hope, from such familiar union of Christ with us" (*S.T.*,III,75,1c; Dom. Traus.).
[41] John 15:4,9,14–15.
[42] Luke 2:49.
[43] Gal. 2:20. In the writings of St. Thomas, the doctor and poet of the Eucharist, we find, among so many others, this splendid passage: "From the power of this sacrament results a certain transformation of man in Christ through love, and this is its proper effect" (In *IV Sent.*, d.12,q.2, art.2,sol.1).
[44] John 6:58.
[45] Cf. Phil. 2:7.
[46] I Tim. 2:5.
[47] John 1:14.
[48] Gal. 2:20.
[49] Cf. Gal. 4:4.
[50] John 6:32–33.

[51] John 15:9.
[52] John 16:27.
[53] Cf. John 17:23.
[54] I Cor. 10:21.
[55] Cf. I Cor. 10:16.
[56] Acts 4:32.
[57] "The sacrament of the Eucharist pertains pre-eminently to charity, since it is the sacrament of ecclesiastical unity, containing, as it does, Him in whom the whole Church is united and made firm, namely, Christ. Hence, the Eucharist is, as it were, a certain source and bond of charity" (*Suppl.*,71,9c).

Similarly, Pope Pius X spoke of the Eucharist as the sign, the root, and the source of Catholic unity (Cf. "Const. Apost.," *A.A.S.*, 1912, p. 615).
[58] John 17:22.
[59] Estimable theologians are not altogether wanting who question, and even deny, that Mary truly died. As they see it, the language by which Pope Pius XII defined Mary's Assumption does not necessarily define her death as well. See, for example, Gabriel M. Roschini, O.S.M., "Il problema della morte di Maria dopo la Costituzione Dogmatica *Munificentissimus Deus*," *Marianum,* 13 (1952:1) pp. 148–163. A convenient English summary of this article may be found in *Theology Digest* 2 (1954:2) pp. 73–76. —Translator's note.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Mass (I): *Sacrifice of Christ*

SUMMARY: 1. The Same Victim as on the Cross. . . . 2. The Same Sacrifice as on the Cross. . . . 3. Oneness of the Sacrifice of the Altar with the Sacrifice of the Cross. . . . 4. The Same Effects as from the Sacrifice of the Cross. . . . 5. The Same Priest as on the Cross. . . . 6. The Same Thoughts and Aspirations in the Soul of Christ.

The sacrifice of the Mass is the sacrifice of the Cross sacramentally perpetuated.

IN ESTABLISHING the Eucharist divine Wisdom wrought a twofold wonder. It made possible first of all the personal coming of Christ into each of His redeemed to apply to them all the benefits of His incarnation; and secondly, for the Church it provided a perpetual cult through which God receives infinite praise and adoration. In fact, it was most of all for the Church that Jesus instituted the Eucharist, so that she might have a sacrifice that contains the crucified Christ as He was when He offered Himself on the Cross. Hence, no other work or action performed by the Church militant can match the sublimeness and grandeur of a Mass.[1]

As with all other Christian mysteries, if we want to have more than a superficial appreciation of the Eucharistic sacrifice, we must bring it into proper focus with the Redemption and the Incarnation. For these two mysteries are basically one. In the life of the Church the Mass occupies the same central position as Calvary does in the economy of our redemption. The Mass is the culminating point of the mystery of salvation. Everything flows from, and everything converges in, the Mass. In the Eucharistic sacrifice the Son of God again offers Himself to His Father in behalf of His Church, so that with Him, through Him,

and in Him she can reach to heaven, up to the Trinity Itself, and bring down to herself all the fruits of His sacrificial immolation. In the Mass, then, we have Christ as priest and victim here on earth, offering Himself to His Father in heaven for the infinite glory of the Trinity and for the salvation of the world. We have the same priest and the same victim as on the Cross. We have, perpetuated, the same redeeming sacrifice, the same effects for salvation, the same inner thoughts and aspirations as in the soul of the crucified Christ on the Cross. "As often as the memorial of this sacrificial offering is celebrated, the work of our redemption is enacted." [2] These words from the Mass for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost sum up the whole mystery of the Eucharist. St. Thomas expresses the same thought even more succinctly: "This sacrament contains the entire mystery of our salvation." [3]

How, one asks, is such a mystery possible? The answer is that it is possible, but it must be properly understood. For one thing, the unity of the plan of redemption forbids us to divorce the Eucharist as sacrifice from the Eucharist as sacrament. In the liturgy the Church always stresses the point that sacrifice and sacrament must be considered as two complementary aspects of one and the same mystery, the mystery of the altar. The key to the mystery of the Eucharist lies in the principles of sacramental theology. These alone make it possible to explain how there can be in the Church a permanent and abiding sacrifice that is identical in substance with that of the Cross, a sacrifice that permits the Word Incarnate to transcend the limitations and conditions of history, of time and space, so as to be perpetually crucified in the midst of the Church militant for the sake of her salvation. Without recourse to the sacramental realm it is impossible to understand how we can be in the presence of the same victim, of the same redeeming sacrifice, of the same fruits of salvation, of the same priest, and of the same thoughts and aspirations in the soul of Christ. The sacramental order, and it alone, can put us in the presence of the death of Christ and make available to us

the whole mystery of the crucified Christ. This it does by means of its symbolism, which is always efficacious and which, in the Eucharist, directly and immediately signifies the immolation of Christ.

1. THE SAME VICTIM AS ON THE CROSS

On the altar, as on Calvary, the sacrificial victim is God. Our faith assures us of this perpetual presence of the crucified Christ. The sacramental words of consecration are unmistakably clear: "This is My body. . . . This is the chalice of My blood . . . which shall be shed for you and for many unto the remission of sins." [4] The teaching of the Church is that the sacrament of the Eucharist makes present the whole reality of Christ: His body, His blood, His soul, His divine nature, all the spiritual riches contained in the priesthood of the Word Incarnate and in His grace of headship. On the altar "one and the same victim as on the Cross" [5] is immolated. The Christian consciousness has always believed, resolutely and with all its strength, that the Eucharistic sacrifice contains the crucified Christ Himself. The faithful know beyond question that in the Mass the same victim is offered as on Calvary, that is to say, that the Mass is the immolation of the body and blood of the Son of God.

2. THE SAME SACRIFICE AS ON THE CROSS

Here we touch on the most mysterious as well as the most consoling aspect of the mystery of the Mass, namely, on its substantial identity with the sacrifice of the Cross, the only difference being in the manner of oblation. On Calvary Christ was offered in a bloody manner; on the altar He is offered in a sacramental, unbloody, manner.[6] In order to find some explanation of this mystery, which at best must always remain a mystery, theologians have resorted to a thousand and one different theories. Nevertheless, the truth in the matter is one and the

same, and traditionally the Church has always sought it in the essentially representative character of the Eucharistic sacrifice. For the Eucharist is essentially a sacrifice that is representative of the sacrifice on the Cross.[7] Hence, one might well wish an end to the often fanciful, not to say absurd, attempts made by theologians of the Counter Reformation to find in the Eucharistic immolation the elements of a real—that is, physical—immolation. In fact, it is precisely the proper characteristic of the Eucharistic sacrifice to be a true sacrifice[8] without a real, or physical, immolation, since the oblation by blood made on Calvary was more than enough to redeem the world. There is no need for the death by blood on Calvary to be renewed, and no point in seeking to find in the Eucharistic sacrifice the equivalent of a sacrifice of the natural order, or the equivalent of a new physical martyrdom in the flesh of Christ.

On this matter, moreover, Sacred Scripture is not altogether silent. Did not St. Paul insist that "Christ, having risen from the dead, dies now no more"?[9] His body is no longer subject to suffering and death. His life is with the blessed, in the state of glory; and there is no possibility of diminishing its grandeur or blessedness. The Christ of eternity is always present before the Father's majesty. He is in possession of beatific happiness and inamissible glory. It is this Christ, the Christ of heaven, that we possess in the Eucharistic host, together with the properties that belong to His glorified state. The Christ of the Eucharist and the Christ of glory are the same. Both in the Christ of the host and the Christ of glory there is the splendor of the life without end. They are not different Christs, only the manner of being present is different. *Non alius, sed aliter.* Hence, we must not take the bodily person of Jesus as the immediate starting point in our quest for the key that will give us a solution to the Eucharistic mystery. It is absolutely imperative to shun every explanation of this mystery that would assimilate it to a sacrifice of the natural order. For, as we have said, the Eucharistic Christ is not subject to bodily assault or suffering or death; He is invulnerable, im-

passible, immortal. Only the light of the gospel permits us to penetrate this mystery of the faith; which indeed it is, namely, a *mysterium fidei.* In the Eucharistic sacrifice everything, both oblation and immolation, takes place on the sacramental level.

In the post-Reformation this sacramental approach to the Eucharist was, if not lost sight of altogether, at least much overlooked. The result was what might have been expected. The Counter Reformation theories regarding the essence of the sacrifice of the Mass are almost endless in number and variety. The earnest study of these theories is, to say the least, a painstaking, if not nerve-wracking task, abounding as they do in such extravagant and often fanciful subtleties of interpretation. The theologian who has ever tried to tread his way through this maze of opinions breathes a sigh of relief when he turns again, in simple faith, to the clear-cut intuition of traditional Christian thought regarding the "sacrament of our redemption." [10] He will then appreciate the directness and simplicity found in the treatment of a genius like St. Thomas, who, on this point as in so many, echoes faithfully the most reliable tradition of Catholic thought. St. Thomas bases his entire exposition of the Eucharistic sacrifice on one fundamental principle from which he never departs, namely, on the principle that it is a sacrament whose rite constitutes an immolation.[11] In constructing his theology of the Mass, therefore, the Angelic Doctor, as is well known, never leaves the sacramental order.

Thus, as the real shedding of the blood of redemption which Christ offered up constitutes the essence of the sacrifice of the Cross, so does the rite of double consecration, which both signifies and effects the sacramental separation of the body and blood of Christ constitute the whole essence of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the sacrifice which the Church, through her priests, offers in the name and in the person of Christ. In both sacrifices are found the same priest, the same victim, the same immolation, the shedding of the same blood. On the altar, therefore, the same sacrifice of redemption as on Calvary is substantially perpetuated. What-

ever in the sacrifice of the altar is new or different is of the sacramental order. Because of the efficacy of the sacramental formulas, the sacrificial rite of the Eucharist contains the crucified Christ Himself, and as such it is the most expressive representation, the most perfect sacrament, of the Passion of Christ. The symbolical rite of double consecration signifies and effects, sacramentally, the shedding of Christ's blood. This is enough to constitute a new order of things, an order in which is perpetuated, with each Mass, the one sacrifice of redemption on Calvary. The essence of the Eucharistic sacrifice, then, consists in the ritualistic oblation and immolation performed in the sacrament of our redemption.[12] At the Consecration the body and blood of Christ are sacramentally separated, and thereby Christ is put in the state of sacrificial victim, even as He was on the Cross. The whole redemption is present in a sacramental mode. All the historical reality of the sacrifice in blood is made present under this new mode, a mode that was created by God to communicate to men in all future ages the benefits of the redemption by putting every soul in contact with its Saviour, and to perpetuate, substantially, the one sacrifice of the Cross which reconciled the world to God.

In explaining the manner by which the sacrifice of Golgotha is perpetuated, our faith allows us Catholics a great deal of freedom. In itself, the Eucharistic mystery is a simple reality. But it is a reality that can transcend the limitations imposed on historical events by their successive unfoldment. It can do so because the Eucharist is a sacrifice that gets its essential nature solely and strictly from its representative or significative character. A sign always points immediately to the thing signified, whatever its concrete position in time and space. In the present instance it does not matter whether the sign came before or after Calvary, whether in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Last Supper or in the unbloody sacrifice of the altar.[13] The sacrifice of the Last Supper and the sacrifice of the altar are both a true sacrifice of the sacramental order, a sacrifice that is significative and rep-

resentative of the one sacrifice of the Cross. The sacrifice of the Last Supper was an anticipation of the Cross; the sacrifice of the altar presents it as a memorial. Both derive all their sacrificial reality from their sacramental symbolism, which signifies and effects and makes present, in a bloodless manner, the offering and personal immolation of the Son of God on the Cross. The whole essence of the Eucharistic sacrifice, whether at the Last Supper or on the altar, consists in this ritualistic oblation, which brings to pass an immolation belonging to an utterly new and different order. To preserve the reality of this sacrifice there is no need to postulate for it an alteration in the bodily person of Christ, nor a change in His natural being. This, as a matter of fact, would not even be possible, since, as indicated earlier, the Christ of eternity is beyond our physical reach or grasp, beyond physical modification by us.

By means of the new, and mysterious, mode of being in which it operates, the sacrificial symbolism of the Eucharist transcends, as we have said, the laws of space and time that circumscribe historical events and reaches directly to the thing it both signifies and sacramentally effects, namely, to Christ dead on the Cross. It is futile, and even perilous, to seek the nature of this sacrifice outside of very rigidly established limits, that is, to go beyond the clear-cut signification set forth by the words of the sacrament and the exterior gestures of the celebrant, the gestures complementing the words to give them their full symbolic expression. Once more, in order to ensure a true understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice we must ever guard against going beyond or forsaking the sacramental realm. For in the Eucharist it is not essentially a question of "bread" or of "wine," or even of "the person of Christ," but of a *body* that is *offered up* and of *blood* that is *shed. The rite itself is essentially sacrificial.* In the Eucharist we have what we symbolize—nothing more and nothing less. We have the body and blood of Christ in the state of separation as on the Cross, a memorial of Christ's death, a Christ sacramentally immolated. We have a sacrifice of an order that is

utterly new and different in the sense that it does not entail the real (that is, the physical) death of, nor any physical assault on, the victim.

Briefly, to conclude this point, if some understanding and explanation of this sacrifice is to be possible at all, it will have to be within the realm of sacramental signification. Everything in this sacrifice takes place in the order of sacramental and symbolical representation: representation, that is, of the immolation on the Cross, the one sacrifice of redemption by blood, whose reality is perpetuated in the Eucharist under a mode and manner that is not by blood. On this capital point of our faith, may we repeat, it is imperative that we return to what is both the most profound and the most traditional view of the Church, namely, to the conception of a sacramental sacrifice.[13a]

3. ONENESS OF THE SACRIFICE OF THE ALTAR WITH THE SACRIFICE OF THE CROSS

Unless we explain the Eucharistic sacrifice in terms of the sacramental order, it is impossible to see how the sacrifice of the altar and that of the Cross are one sacrifice. For, if the Eucharist were a sacrifice of the natural order, we should inevitably have, not one, but two different sacrifices. But if we interpret this mystery according to the principles of sacramental theology, the basic oneness of the Christian sacrifice becomes sufficiently clear. Under a representative mode or manner the same sacrifice can be repeated indefinitely, without losing its essential oneness or unity. In other words, the sign and the thing signified do not make a multiplicity. It is always the same reality, always the same sacrifice, that is perpetuated. Strictly speaking it is not even renewed, since the sacramental sacrifice remains essentially one with the sacrifice of the Cross. It is essentially one with the Cross through symbolic signification, meaning that it represents that sacrifice; and one with it through dependence, meaning that it depends on the Cross. Its reality or objectivity, moreover, is

not jeopardized by calling it a "memorial" or a "representative sacrifice." There is no warrant, then, for abandoning such usage. The Church herself offers no other, thus indicating that the whole mystery is somehow conveyed by these words.

Needless to say, this mysterious mode of being that characterizes the Eucharistic sacrifice lies beyond full investigation by reason, even as the manner of the Real Presence exceeds the laws and conditions that circumscribe the course of ordinary historical events. Yet we do speak of the substantial identity of the Eucharistic Christ with the historical Christ, and even with the Christ of eternity. In the same way, then, we can speak of substantial and numerical identity between the sacrifice of the altar and that of the Cross. Only the mode or manner of being offered is different. On Calvary this sacrifice was offered by Christ Himself in its natural and historical reality, and in a mode that was attended by bloodshed. On the altar, through the ministry of priests, it is offered in its Eucharistic reality, in a mode that is determined by the general laws of sacramental symbolism and not attended by suffering or bloodshed.

Thus, making our way cautiously by the lights and shadows of faith, we can not only glimpse the existence of the sacrifice of the altar but can also gain some measure of understanding its essential nature. Nevertheless, we need to keep in mind that here we are in the presence of mystery. In the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice the Church herself takes care to remind us of this, for it is not without reason that she speaks of it there as the mystery of faith: *mysterium fidei.*

4. THE SAME EFFECTS AS FROM THE SACRIFICE OF THE CROSS

The immolation of Christ on Calvary made atonement and reparation for all the sins of the world. It was the meritorious source both of all graces of salvation and of our eternal happiness. It was a sacrifice of adoration, of thanksgiving, and of

supplication, rendering infinite glory to God. It was, in a word, the supreme act of our redemption.

Since His death on the Cross, Christ's hour of expiating and meriting is over, but in the Eucharistic sacrifice He continues to impart to us the merits He gained, and the atonement He made, through His redeeming sacrifice. In the Eucharist, also, He performs on earth, in a manner that always makes it actual and efficacious, the same work of glorifying His Father that He performs in heaven by His life of adoration, of praise, and of prayer; for these acts are the very essence of the Christian religion. The role of the Church in the sacrifice of the altar consists in uniting herself with this unceasing praise that Christ offers from His heart and soul to the triune Godhead. In the Mass the Church, united with the soul of the Christ of Golgotha, contemplates what Jesus Himself saw and contemplated from His Cross. She expiates, she adores, she offers thanks and supplication to God. In the Eucharist her spiritual horizon extends as far as that of Christ Himself; it embraces the whole plan of redemption, reaching out beyond the narrow limits of earth to the limitless perspectives of heaven.

The texts of the liturgy stress with unusual vigor this comprehensive view and purpose of the Eucharistic sacrifice. They emphasize that the Christian assisting at Mass is in living union with the entire Church of heaven and earth, that he is in close and intimate communion with the whole mystical body of Christ. His spiritual vision must be comprehensive, striving to attain, as far as possible, the universal reach of Christ's own thought and love. He, too, should aspire to give, were it possible, infinite glory to God, and to bring down from heaven upon men everywhere the graces of salvation which they and the whole Church have need of. Thus, in the *Suscipe Sancte Pater* he prays to God for all the faithful of the Christian world: "Accept, O holy Father, almighty and eternal God, this host for the all-holy sacrifice, which I, Thine unworthy servant, offer unto Thee, my living and

true God, to atone for my numberless sins of wilfullness and neglect; on behalf of all here present, and likewise for all faithful Christians, living and dead, that it may profit me and them as a means of salvation unto life everlasting." [14] In this prayer, the spiritual outlook of the Christian is truly universal; it includes all places and all ages; his supplication is not only for his own salvation, but for that of the whole world. The Christian, as a matter of fact, never prays alone. All his brothers in Christ are always present with him. In the Mass especially his prayer is all-inclusive. He implores God to grant peace and unity to the Church, to protect her from all evil, and to guide her in the fulfillment of her mission in the world. He remembers the whole body of true Christian believers, united with their spiritual heads and with the supreme shepherd, the Pope, who holds the place of Christ.[15]

After the Consecration, when Christ is present on the altar, the Christian again prays that the Church may enjoy peace and unity. He prays for deliverance from all evils, past, present, and to come. Nor does he forget one other important segment of the Church, those suffering in purgatory: "To these, O Lord, and to all who sleep in Christ, we beseech Thee to grant, of Thy goodness, a state of comfort, light, and peace." [16]

His thought also turns to the Church triumphant, already face to face with God in the splendors of glory, praising and proclaiming His infinite grandeur. He remembers first Mary ever Virgin. Then he makes thoughtful recollection of all the saints who loved and served Christ: virgins, confessors, and martyrs of the primitive Church. Unceasingly added to these are others, saints of later and recent times. And his contemplation does not rest with them. His soul wants to soar aloft to the throne of the thrice holy God. With the angels, the archangels, and the whole multitude of heavenly spirits he wishes to be united with the Word Incarnate, with Him through whom the angels pour forth their praises,[17] before whom the powers and dominations tremble;

with Him who is the "one Mediator between God and men," [18] and who is at the head of the universal chorus of praise in heaven. The Christian, in short, wants to be merged in Christ, who stands at the summit of creation, priest through all eternity, through whom all graces are sent from God to men and angels, and through whom the whole universe sends up to God its chorus of praise and glory. The vision of a Christian at Mass does not stop in its upward movement until it reaches the moment of that sublime doxology which brings the Canon to a close. Then, with the Church, in the presence of the immolated Christ on the altar, he says in silence: "Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, is to Thee, God the Father almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory." [19]

One cannot but be filled with awe as he contemplates the grand and immense setting against which the mystery of the Mass is unfolded. The entire universe is enshrined in this mystery in which the whole work of redemption, the whole history and presentation of our salvation, is perpetuated before our eyes. But its grandeur and immensity escape the narrow view. At the Mass, if ever, the Christian must be able to see whole. He must approach the altar in a spirit that is truly Catholic, as vast and sweeping in survey as the material and spiritual universe combined.

The Church asks the priest to recollect himself before celebrating this mystery in which he is to become one in heart and mind with all the sentiments of the soul of Christ. She requests him to implore God that he may be worthy, in spite of his human frailty, to offer this sacrifice "unto the praise and glory of almighty God and of the whole Church triumphant, for his own personal welfare and for that of the whole Church militant, for all who have asked to be remembered in his prayers both in general and in particular, and for the welfare of the holy Roman Church." [20] Thus, the Mass is truly the Cross, with all its infinite worth for the glorification of God and the redemption of the world.

5. THE SAME PRIEST AS ON THE CROSS

Since the incarnation the world has been in possession of the one Priest over all creation, whose work it is to bring the gifts of God to men and, in turn, to make an oblation of all creatures to God. The Epistle to the Hebrews contains the classic description of Christ's eternal priesthood and its surpassing grandeur. According to the Epistle, we have "a great high priest . . . Jesus the Son of God." [21] He is now the one Priest of redeemed mankind, the "one Mediator between God and men," [22] by His divine nature "equal to God" [23] His Father, being "the brightness of his glory and the image of his substance." [24] He "has passed into the heavens" [25] by His own power. To no other creature, whether angel or man, has God the Father said: "Thou art my son, I this day have begotten thee. . . . Thou art a priest forever." [26]

During His life on earth the Word Incarnate acted as priest in all He did. Each of His actions was an act of His priestly mediatorship. It was not until Calvary, however, that He exercised His priesthood in its supreme fullness. Since God no longer wanted "sacrifices and oblations and sin-offerings," He said: "Behold, I come." [27] In one act of infinite love He offered to His Father His own life as the Word Incarnate, being Himself both priest and victim. The same Christ continues to offer to His Father the sacrifice of Calvary, perpetuated on the altar. The visible priest is only an instrument of the invisible Priest. In the ritualistic oblation of the sacrifice of the altar, the Word Incarnate Himself has the principal role. The minister of the Church only acts in the name and in the person of Christ Himself. He is no more than His representative, His authorized ambassador, who by means of the words of the sacrament, unites the sacrifice of the altar with the oblation that is always in act in heaven, which is to say, the oblation always being actually offered in heaven by the eternal Priest.

In the lives of certain saints it is reported that they sometimes

saw, above the visible priest, Christ Himself celebrating the sacrifice of the Mass. Faith teaches us that such is really the case. The Son of God offers Himself in person to His Father through the instrumentality of His priests,[28] availing Himself of their sacramental collaboration, consecrating through them, immolating Himself through them, but reserving to Himself the same active role on the altar as on Calvary, though exercising it in a different manner. The Christ of Golgotha is again present, the same Christ in the same act of offering up His life for the same ends of glorification to the Father and redemption to the world. Because the priesthood of the Church militant is an instrumental and sacramental priesthood, it is possible for Christ Himself to be both the efficient cause, through transubstantiation, of the Eucharistic presence and the principal minister in the oblation of His own body and His own blood. The visible minister, once more, is only the instrument of the eternal Priest. It is faith that teaches us the efficacy of sacramental symbolism; it is through this efficacious symbolism that we are brought directly to Christ, whose presence among us is always as priest.

It would be a most unwarranted and strangely diminished view of the Mass to consider it as a mere action of the Church in which, following Christ's past admonition of the Last Supper, she carried out the same rite as He did, doing so at His behest and in imitation of Him, but without any actual intervention on the part of the eternal Priest. The Mass would, in this view, be no more than a pure remembrance of the institution of His priesthood and of His immolation on the Cross. All theologians, therefore, rightly insist on this offering in person by the Word Incarnate. For, this interior oblation, this inner offering, which is ever actual, ever in act, in the heart of Christ, constitutes the very soul of the mystery of the Mass, the hidden source of its infinite worth. The eternal Christ always living before the Father is the same Christ that lies hidden beneath the host, continuing, Himself, to offer His entire Church to the Blessed Trinity.

6. THE SAME THOUGHTS AND ASPIRATIONS IN THE SOUL OF CHRIST

To know what thoughts and aspirations are nearest to Christ during the Mass we need only recall the sentiments and desires that were closest to His priestly soul in His life on earth. In other words, we have only to remember why He came into the world. From the first moment of His incarnation Christ's soul was actuated, day and night, by a twofold purpose, namely, the glorification of His Father and the redemption of the world. Around these two thoughts the whole inner life of Christ was centered, but one was uppermost in His mind and served as the unifying principle of His spiritual life as the Word Incarnate: this thought, beyond all doubt, was His concern for the Father's glory. Anyone who has not understood this has never gone beyond the surface of the mystery of the Son of God made man. In coming into the world His first thought was of His Father. St. Paul quotes Him as saying: "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not. . . . Then said I, 'Behold, I come.' " [29]

In going through the Gospels we cannot help noticing this primary purpose of Christ's coming into the world. Thus, the only words of Jesus during His first thirty years that are recorded by the Evangelists stand out like a beacon light against those long years of darksome silence. They come almost like a bolt out of the clear: sudden, revealing, striking. "Did you not know," He asked, "that I must be about my Father's business?" [30] What a source of new insight and enlightenment it must have been for His mother to hear these words! As for us, we should remember that the entire gospel must be read in the light of this declaration. Upon closer scrutiny all events of Christ's life, even those that appear only remotely, or not at all, related to this central theme, will be seen to be motivated by it. To take but one example: that moving scene in which Christ meets the Samaritan woman. His purpose in meeting this common woman was to teach her to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Here, as always, the

Person most immediately present in His mind, the one who, though invisible, determined everything He did, was the Father who "seeks such to worship him." [31]

If one reads attentively the discourse of Jesus to the crowd, or the more familiar conversations with His disciples, one cannot but sense that everything He said was basically motivated by His concern to bring men, step by step, to the awareness and recognition of the divine fatherhood and of His own true nature as the Son of God. Such, for example, is the purpose and intent of the words: "I and the Father are one." [32] Christ made it clear that His whole mission on earth centered around the task of teaching the Father to the world. This is evident from words such as these: "Father . . . I have manifested thy name to . . . men. . . . I have glorified thee on earth." [33]

Furthermore, His sublime priestly prayer, in which He reveals the most intimate thoughts and sentiments of His soul, is only an outpouring of filial love toward His Father. And when He speaks to those around Him of His work of redemption, it is only to make them understand that His whole mystical body is called to enter with Him into union and unity with the Father, "that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and thou in me." [34] Beyond all question, then, in the eyes of Christ the redemption He wrought was primarily and par excellence a work of glorification to the Father.

Not infrequently the last words of a dying man are the key to his whole life. The last words from the lips of Christ on the Cross reveal the basic disposition of His heart, namely, His complete submission to His Father: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." [35] Again, after the Resurrection His first words extol His Father's name; only this time, since the redemption was now accomplished, He uses a collective expression which epitomizes the mystery of the total Christ in its entirety: "I ascend to my Father and your Father." [36] So much for the Gospels.

St. Paul, in turn, takes up the same theme. He depicts the Christ of eternity as always living before His Father to make

intercession for us.[37] Also, we know—again it is St. Paul who teaches us—that when the hour will have come for the whole universe to enter into glory, Christ in a final act of homage will deliver His kingdom to the Father.[38] And then shall be the end: *Deinde finis.* . . . God will be all in all.[39] When at last the redemption is finally and fully consummated, all the elect will have but one and the same Father who is in heaven.

It is by seeing beneath the surface, by penetrating the depths of Christ's mystery, that we discover the thoughts and sentiments uppermost in His soul at the moment when He celebrates, together with His Church, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The words of consecration bring Him in our midst as He is and lives in eternity. Sacramental theology teaches that under the form of a representative sacrifice the Christ of the altar is not only one with the Christ of the Cross but also substantially identical with the Christ of eternity. In virtue of the laws of concomitance the Mass contains all of Christ, Christ as He is in glory, with His body that dies no more, with the interior and ever actual thoughts and aspiration in His soul, with the infinite riches of His divine Person, eternally living in the bosom of the Father in the unity of one and the same Spirit.

If, from one point of view, we must carefully distinguish the various aspects of the Eucharistic mystery so as to get a better grasp of its eminent reality, from another point of view we must be just as careful to keep in mind that Christ is actually one. There are not two Christs, one in heaven and one in the host. It is the same Christ that is in the presence of His Father and in our midst, offering adoration, thanksgiving, and supplication. The Church above and the Church below are one Church gathered around the one Christ. The Son, "the only-begotten of the Father," [40] is present in the Church that dwells amid the splendors of glory; but, though seen only dimly through the obscurities of faith, He is also present on earth, behind the Eucharistic veil. The mystery of the Mass unites the Church militant and the Church triumphant in one and the same worship in-

corporating adoration, supplication, and praise, a worship that finds its perfect expression and assumes infinite value in the oblation that Jesus unceasingly offers in His soul, the same Jesus who is present in the midst of His Church both on earth and in heaven, who is the one Mediator, our Priest forever.

Notes to Chapter Four

[1] The Council of Trent, calling attention to the august character of the Mass, reminds priests of the care with which they should offer the Holy Sacrifice, for "no other office performed by Christ's faithful is so holy and so divine as this awesome mystery in which on the altar the same life-giving Victim by which we were reconciled to God the Father, is daily offered by the priests" (*"Decretum de observandis et evitandis in celebratione Missae"*).

[2] Secret, Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

[3] *S.T.*, III, 83, 4.

[4] Consecration of the Mass.

[5] Council of Trent, Sess.xxii, cap.2.

[6] "In this divine sacrifice that is enacted in the Mass, the same Christ who on the altar of the Cross offered Himself once by blood (*cruente*), is contained and immolated without blood (*incruente*). . . . The victim is one and the same, who, offering Himself now by the ministry of priests, formerly offered Himself on the Cross, the sole difference being the manner of oblation" (Council of Trent, Sess.xxii, cap.2).

[7] There are many passages from the Council of Trent that support and justify this theological explanation of the Mass as a representative sacrifice. Thus, the Council declares that our Lord left His Spouse, the visible Church, a sacrifice "by which should be *represented* that sacrifice that was to be offered once by blood on the Cross. . . . He instituted a new Pasch, namely, Himself, to be *immolated under visible signs* by the Church through the priests, in memory of His going from the world to the Father" (Sess.xxii, cap.1).

[8] "If anyone say that in the Mass is not offered to God a true and proper sacrifice . . . let him be anathema" (Council of Trent, Sess.xxii, can.1). The Mass is a true sacrifice, in the proper sense of the word, but without a real, that is, physical or blood, immolation: *incruente immolatur* (Sess.xxii, cap.2).

[9] Rom. 6:19.

[10] "May Thy bountiful blessing come down upon us, O Lord; and

through the prayers of Thy holy martyrs, may it make our gifts well-pleasing, and make them also a sacrament of redemption to ourselves: *et nobis sacramentum redemptionis efficiat*" (Secret, Mass of the Holy Four Crowned Martyrs, Nov. 8). According to St. Thomas, "The Eucharist is the *perfect sacrament* of our Lord's *Passion,* as containing Christ crucified (*passum*)" (*S.T.*,III,73,5,ad 2m).

[11] The masters of the Thomistic doctrine rightly point out that the very manner in which St. Thomas poses the problem (namely: "Whether Christ is sacrificed in this sacrament?" *S.T.*,III,83,1) indicates that the answer will be along *purely sacramental lines.* In fact, it is under the question dealing with the "rite of the sacrament" that St. Thomas speaks of "immolation." In his view this immolation remains in the "ritual" and "sacramental" order. It is "signified" by the double consecration, which ritually "separates" the body and blood of Christ, in imitation of the real separation that took place on Calvary. For the followers of St. Thomas, therefore, the essence of the sacrifice of the Mass consists solely in this ritualistic separation attending the Consecration, which represents the offering and blood immolation of Calvary.

Thus St. Thomas writes: "In this sacrament is signified the Passion of Christ, in which His blood was separated from His body. Hence, in this sacrament the sign of His body and the sign of His blood should be offered *separately*" (*In IV Sent.*,d.XI,q.ii,art.1 q.1.). Parallel texts abound in the *Summa;* for example, III,78,3,ad 2m, where he says: "The blood separately consecrated expressly represents the Passion of Christ."

[12] The essence of sacrifice includes both an oblation (proximate genus) and an immolation (specific difference). In the Eucharistic sacrifice both these elements are of the sacramental order and realized in the rite of consecration.

[13] The sacrificial character of the Last Supper is clearly taught by the Council of Trent: "At the Last Supper, on the night He was betrayed . . . under the appearances of bread and wine He offered to God the Father His body and blood" (Sess. xxii, cap. 1).

[13a] English readers will find an excellent study of St. Thomas' doctrine on the nature of sacrament in general and of the sacramental nature of the sacrifice of the Mass in particular, in Abbot Vonier's now classical *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist* (first published in 1925; reprinted, 1946, Westminster, Md.: The Newman Bookshop). —Translator's note.

[14] Opening prayer of the Offertory of the Mass.

[15] See the beginning of the Canon.

[16] Commemoration of the Dead.

[17] See the Common Preface.

[18] I Tim. 2:5.

[19] Closing prayer of the Canon.

[20] Prayer of intention from the prayers called "Preparation for Mass."

[21] Heb. 4:14.

[22] I Tim. 2:5.

[23] Phil. 2:6.
[24] Heb. 1:3.
[25] Heb. 4:14.
[26] Heb. 5:5,6.
[27] Heb. 10:8-9.
[28] Thus the Council of Trent declares that Christ Himself is offered "by the Church through the priests" (Sess.xxii, cap.1).
[29] Heb. 10:5,7.
[30] Luke 2:49.
[31] John 4:23.
[32] John 10:30.
[33] John 17:6,4.
[34] John 17:22-23.
[35] Luke 23:46.
[36] John 20:17.
[37] Cf. Heb. 7:25.
[38] Cf. I Cor. 15:24.
[39] Cf. I Cor. 15:28.
[40] John 1:14.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Mass (II): *Sacrifice of the Total Christ*

SUMMARY: 1. Sacrifice of Atonement. . . . 2. Sacrifice of Adoration. . . . 3. Sacrifice of Thanksgiving. . . . 4. Sacrifice of Supplication. . . . 5. *Suscipe Sancta Trinitas.* . . . 6. Victim of the Trinity. . . . 7. Act of Offering Oneself as Victim to the Trinity. . . . 8. Like the Drop of Water in the Chalice.

The Mass is the offering of the total Christ to the Trinity.

THE principal ends for which the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered are four, namely, atonement, adoration, thanksgiving, and supplication. Of these, atonement is the most difficult for the modern mind to appreciate, for it has lost virtually all consciousness of sin. In fact, modern man can scarcely conceive of a God coming into the world for the purpose, above all, of atonement. Nevertheless, atonement is one of the main purposes of the Mass as it was of the Cross.

1. SACRIFICE OF ATONEMENT

The Christian faith accords a most prominent place to reparation. Indeed, it teaches that the immediate reason for the incarnation, from the standpoint of the human race, was to make reparation for mankind's infinite offense against God. This is a truth that stands out on almost every page of Sacred Scripture. Thus, in the Gospel of the feast of the Annunciation the angel, the messenger sent by the Blessed Trinity, represents the whole mission of Christ as that of a saviour, as appears from the prophecy of Zachary: "To give to his people knowledge of salvation through forgiveness of their sins." [1] St. John says the same thing with his usual simplicity: "He appeared to take our sins away." [2]

He urges us, moreover, to approach this mystery of a God-Saviour with a spirit of deep faith and confidence in the infinite love which the Father has for His children of adoption. God, he says, sent us His Son as a "propitiation for our sins." [3]

St. Paul speaks in the same vein. According to him, Christ "has appeared for the destruction of sin." [4] But atonement can only come by blood, for "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." [5] But, observes St. Peter, we were redeemed, "not with the perishable things, with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." [6] Christ Jesus, to quote St. Paul again, "gave himself a ransom for all," [7] and "in him we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins." [8] In fact, the Apostle regards this theme of remission of sin as the basic truth on which the mystery of our redemption rests: "For I delivered to you first of all, what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." [9] In words somewhat less refined but pointedly realistic, St. Peter, writing to the first Christians, called their attention to the fact that Christ Himself "bore our sins in his body upon the tree . . . and by his stripes you were healed." [10]

It is not surprising, then, to find the same emphasis on expiation in St. Thomas. In his forthright assertion that the task of expiation was paramount in the priestly soul of Christ,[11] he is only echoing the genuine teaching of the Gospels and St. Paul, and the common teaching of the Fathers of the Church and of the medieval theologians. This need of reparation was always uppermost in the soul of Christ the Mediator. Because of His immeasurable love for His Father, Jesus understood as only He could that the most terrible aspect of sin was not that it resulted in the loss of our divinely appointed happiness and in the necessity of eternal punishment, but that it was an offense of infinite gravity which had been committed against God through man's rebellion. In man's stead Jesus offered to His Father His own life as the Word Incarnate, a life of equally infinite excellence as that of the Father. This oblation of Christ, of a victim that not

only was equal to God Himself but also was offered by a divine Person, this oblation, as we know, outweighed by an immeasurable degree all the sins of men together with those of the angels; and it rendered such glory to the Trinity that full pardon was granted to all mankind, members of Christ's mystical body.[12] Through the merits of this sacrifice the Father was pleased to regard in man no longer his sin, but only the image of His own beloved Son, "the firstborn among many brethren." [13] Such was the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross: a God offering a God, a God-Priest offering a God-Victim.

Strictly speaking, therefore, there is no need of this redemptive sacrifice being renewed; for by one oblation Christ offered to His Father a sacrifice that propitiated for all the sins of the world till the end of time, and "by one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified." [14] Henceforth, Christ is "seated at the right hand of God," [15] and sinful men have only to "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that [they] may obtain mercy." [16] Christ now is ever before God's countenance to make intercession for us.[17] These words of St. Paul are both striking and significant, describing most accurately the interior disposition that animates the soul of Christ as He stands before the Father in behalf of all members, both actual and future, of His mystical body. They signalize the role of perpetual intercession and propitiation which the Christ of eternity exercises before His Father at the same moment when the Church militant celebrates the Eucharistic sacrifice. The thoughts and aspirations that were Christ's as He hung crucified will endure forever in His priestly soul.

As we have said, there is no need for Christ to offer to God further expiation for the sins of the world. Christ is now beyond the state of merit; He is in the state of glory. The redemptive expiation that He accomplished on Calvary is accomplished forever. All that remains is to apply its effects to the generations to come. This, in fact, is the reason why there exists in the Church militant a perpetual sacrifice of expiation, or rather, of propitia-

tion. The word "propitiation," though less trenchant, is more exact. Expiation bears on guilt, satisfaction on punishment, but propitiation depends on God. We expiate a fault; we make satisfaction for a punishment; but we render God propitious by placating His just anger through the offering of a sacrifice that is pleasing in His sight because of its infinite value.

When offering Christ to His Father, the Church militant asks the Father to remember, as it were, the infinite efficacy of Christ's expiation on the Cross. She offers to God, in a true sacrifice, the blood Victim of Calvary, now sacramentally immolated: "a clean Victim, a holy Victim, a spotless Victim," [18] making atonement for all the sins of men. Beholding this Victim on the altar, this same Son who was crucified but is now risen and ascended to heaven, God the Father receives as much divine honor and gladness as He did at the hour of expiation on Calvary, whereby infinite glory was rendered to the Trinity. All the enormity of the sins of men on earth, even the sum total of the greatest crimes committed by them through weakness or malice (one has only to think of the myriad forms of sin committed in one night in our metropolitan cities)—all that is as nothing when measured against the infinite glory which the personal immolation of God in the host brings to God in reparation for our selfish acts, for our sacrileges, our apostasies, and our infidelities, and for all our acts of cowardice and meanness.[19] When the Church militant takes the Christ of the Mass and offers Him to the Blessed Trinity in expiation of all the sins of the world, God's infinite majesty is placated, and no offense is too great to be forgiven. If men would only unite themselves by the necessary love and fervor with the oblation of the Eucharistic sacrifice, sin itself would disappear from the face of the earth, purgatory would cease to be, and even hell would pass out of existence—if from hell but the smallest act of love could be elicited. It cannot be repeated too often that the Mass, which is the offering up of a God crucified, possesses the infinite value of the offering that Christ made on the Cross; and the Church participates in its

value according to the degree of her actual devotion at the time. Even the most wretched sinner can approach the majesty of the Father without fear. If through faith and love he makes his own the infinite merits and satisfaction that came from the heart of Jesus, should he die at this moment of the Mass, he would again hear the voice of Christ of Golgotha saying to him as to the good thief, "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise." [20]

Lex orandi, lex credendi. The prayer of the Church is an expression of her faith. The texts of the liturgy of the Mass emphasize this universal efficacy of the sacrifice of the altar. Each one of us can offer this sacrifice for his own "numberless sins of willfulness and neglect; on behalf of all here present, and likewise for all faithful Christians, living and dead." [21] The Church prays for the "redemption of souls," [22] and for deliverance from "all evils, past, present, and to come." [23] She prays that no stain of sin remain in the soul,[24] and that the Blessed Trinity may be pleased to accept this sacrifice and look down favorably upon us and upon all those for whom it is offered.[25] Though she may be stained by sin and overladen with every conceivable human defilement, when the Church on earth approaches the throne of God with Christ in her hands, God is appeased and the most Blessed Trinity pardons all repentant sinners in the measure of their good will.

Moreover, when the Church militant offers the Eucharistic sacrifice, she is not alone in being gathered around Christ, but offering the Mass with her is the entire Church triumphant, the Church in heaven above, gazing on the unveiled face of the same Christ that is immolated on the altar. All thoughts of the Church in heaven and the Church on earth are centered on one Christ as He offers to His Father, through the hands of His priests, the same sacrifice as on the Cross. Neither the vision He has of His Father nor His beatific life in the bosom of the Trinity causes any cessation in the task that is His as Christ. Head of the Church, He is unceasingly mindful of our needs and our

salvation; and He will continue to be so until the end of time, when the number of the elect shall be filled up. Meanwhile, He never ceases to offer to His Father the merits of His redemption and the sacrifice of His immolation on the Cross. Even amid the splendors of the state of glory, Christ stands before His Father as the Lamb that was slain: Priest and Victim forever.

The Mass, then, is Christ in the act of offering to His Father the perpetual oblation of Himself, in reparation of God's glory, outraged by sin, in adoration of His uncreated nature and His infinite perfections, in thanksgiving for all His gifts and blessings, in intercession for all needs of His creatures. But Christ does not make this oblation unattended, so to speak. The Mass is Christ and the Church together in the act of supplication, adoration, and reparation. The indivisible unity of the mystical body forbids us to separate Christ from His Church; they are not two, but one. Before the Father's presence there is only one Church, only one Christ, adoring, giving thanks, and supplicating: the total Christ. While the Church on earth, in response to the certain, but mystery-shrouded teachings of faith, celebrates the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Word Incarnate Himself, in the living presence of the Father, offers to the Holy Trinity His human nature, once immolated on the Cross and still bearing in His glorified body the wounds of His crucifixion. And all the saints of the Church triumphant unite their merits gained on earth with the offering that Christ makes: virgins, the merits of purity gloriously preserved; priests and confessors, the merits of their indefatigable labors in the service of souls; doctors, the merits of their writings and teachings, of their long, often late, hours of dedicated study; martyrs, the merits of their heroic and superhuman sufferings; and the whole multitude of unnamed and untold saints, the merits of their countless afflictions on earth, of their daily crucifixions in one form or another.

But far above all angels and saints in heaven, there is a woman of immaculate purity, appearing more radiant and glorious than

doctors, more heroic than martyrs, more resplendent even than cherubim and seraphim, her look fastened on her God and her Son; a woman serene and joyous of heart as, in simple yet sublime gesture, she greets the full assembly of her children. It is the Mother of Christ, the Coredemptress of the world, whose sorrowful motherhood brought salvation to all, and who by herself alone is more powerful to move the heart of God than all the angels and saints together.

Yet, face to face with the utterly divine goodness and spotlessness of the adorable Trinity, all heaven together in the splendors of glory is deeply conscious of its powerlessness to make reparation for the offense committed against God, even by one, least heinous, mortal sin. Like the elders of the Apocalypse, who cast their crowns before the throne of the Lamb,[26] it is then that the whole Church of heaven, in union with the Blessed Virgin, feels the need to take refuge in the soul of Christ and, thus united with Him, to offer to the most Holy Trinity an expiating Victim of infinite glory and spotlessness. United with the Church of heaven, moreover, is the Church on earth; and as in heaven so on earth does the Church turn to Christ to be incorporated with His personal oblation of Himself as the eternally Crucified. In offering Himself, therefore, Jesus, both Priest and Victim, offers with Himself all who are "His" in the scriptural sense. Christ and the Church constitute a single victim, and offer a single oblation to God. Consequently, between God and us there should no longer be question of sin. All the merits of the expiation offered through blood on Calvary and perpetuated on the altar belong to the Church and to each one of us in the measure of our love and fervor.

Primarily, then, this is what the Church does at the Mass: she takes Christ and offers Him to God the Father in expiation of our sins. And to the question, what is the Mass? we reply, in short, that the Mass is the act of offering God to God, in atonement for all the sins of the world.

2. SACRIFICE OF ADORATION

The reason why expiation holds such a basic, although secondary, place in the soul of Christ is found in the actual history of sinful mankind. At the end of time, however, in the eternal City of God, it is not expiation, but adoration, that will be the sentiment dominating all our acts of the virtue of religion. Adoration is the fundamental attitude that a creature should have in regard to God. To love and to adore: there lies the essence of the Christian religion. This basic necessity of adoration might be summed up in some such words as the following: "O my God, who art triune, whom I love and adore, help me to attain complete self-effacement, so that I may be wholly devoted to the praise and glory of Thine infinite perfections."

As now in heaven, so on earth the Word Incarnate was the foremost adorer of the Father. Even on earth He had the immediate vision and the constant contemplation of the immutable Trinity. Day and night His soul was in silent, unceasing adoration of God. Both in His own name and in the name of all creation, He offered to God the homage and reverence due to His infinite majesty. If, as is true, He came into the world to erase sin from the face of the earth, it is equally true that He did so only to prepare a people that would be "worshippers . . . in spirit and in truth. . . . . For the Father . . . seeks such to worship him." [27] Now in heaven it is His desire that through the Eucharistic sacrifice the Church militant be united with His life of adoration and with that of all the blessed. Such is the true meaning of the Mass: it is the living expression of the Church's life of adoration in union with Christ.

On the Cross Christ, the adorer of the Father, offered to the Trinity the sacrifice of His life in testimony of His infinite love and in token of total dependence. Nothing could better express the absolute rights of God over every creature than the immolation of the Word Incarnate, in whom all the perfections of the universe were embodied. This unconditional offering of all the

merits and perfections of the God-man to the Father almighty marked the beginning of a new cult, of the worship in spirit and truth which Jesus had foretold to the Samaritan woman and which is perpetuated, substantially, in the Eucharistic sacrifice, since in it, under sacramental signs signifying the same worshipful immolation, the Christ of the Mass again offers Himself to His Father.

As on earth, so in the presence of the Father in heaven Jesus is the all-perfect adorer. Nothing can divert Him, so to speak, from this eternal office of glorifying the Father. In the beatific vision the light of glory that is His, surpassing that of all the blessed, reveals to Him the unfathomable depths of the Deity. In light free of all admixture of shadow He contemplates the act of creation, that act from which, since the beginning of the world, billions upon billions of creatures of the universe have received their existence; moreover, it is by the same sovereign power that God, without the least effort, one might say, keeps them from reverting to the nothingness whence He produced them. Christ's beatific vision penetrates into the depths of the divine essence. God is revealed to Him as He is in the infinite majesty of His being and power and glory, in the full splendor of His one nature in three Persons, and in His eternal attributes. The contemplation of the transcendent grandeur of Him "who is" fills Him with wonder and admiration. For Him, divine wisdom holds no secrets. The mystery of divine providence is to Him as an open book. He beholds the universe with its myriad celestial worlds stretching forth through endless space, a universe so vast it almost terrifies us, yet it is as nothing to the presence of God.

Indeed, there can be no comparison between the temporal generation of the ephemeral creatures of our universe and the eternal generation of a God in the bosom of the Father. In the Father the only-begotten Son discerns Him who is His principle without principle, the primordial origin from which issues the whole mystery of Three in One, the uncreated source, inexhaust-

ible of fecundity, from which proceed two other divine Persons, the Word who is equal and consubstantial with His Father, and their common Love, also coeternal and consubstantial, who possesses within the same innermost life of the Trinity the same nature and the same attributes as the Father and the Son, sharing in the same unending blessedness, equal to Them in all things, and with Them the principle of all beings in the universe. As Jesus Himself declared: "No one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son." [28] Heaven holds no mystery for the only-begotten Son of the Father. He enjoys the light of full vision; upon seeing the unveiled beauty and grandeur of God and the wondrous works of His omnipotence, the human nature of the Word, made flesh in Christ, turns spontaneously from awe and wonderment to love and adoration. The life of Christ in eternity, before the unhidden presence of the Father, is a life of unceasing adoration.

Furthermore, the whole Church is united with the adoration that rises from the soul of Christ, both the Church triumphant in the bright vision of glory, and the Church on earth, still living amid the shadows and obscurities of faith. The liturgy of the Mass insists on this union of the whole Church with Christ, offering with Him the same praise and adoration. Thus, the priest at the altar makes a remembrance, first, of "the glorious Mary ever Virgin, Mother of our Lord and God, Jesus Christ," [29] but also of all who are present before the throne of God: apostles, martyrs, saints of every age, established forever, all, in the imperishable "vision of peace." [30]

In the Preface the Church on earth, the more worthily to praise her God, appeals in majestic tone to the innumerable host of angelic spirits. Not all are named, even as not all the saints "who have come out of the great tribulation" [31] are named; but we know that all are present, united in the same cult of homage and adoration. Yet, in the presence of the eternal God, what avails human, or even angelic, praise? The most exalted of seraphim must bury their face in their wings, in a manner of

speaking, so radiant is the majesty of God, and so utter the impossibility of their giving to God an infinite praise, one that is worthy of His uncreated nature.

Before the infinite grandeur of a God who is above all created praise, the angels themselves, like all the blessed who share their glory, acknowledge their powerlessness to render worthy praise and adoration; they, too, turn to Christ, the only Priest of the mystical body to which they belong. Through Him, they, as do men, offer their adorations to God; through Him they praise the majesty of God, stand in awe before His power, and offer Him the homage of their reverence and admiration. Through Him every order of heavenly spirits, angels, archangels, thrones and dominations, principalities, powers and virtues, cherubim and seraphim, all in common accord join in unceasing praise, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts! Heaven and earth are filled with Thy glory." To Him be praise, honor, homage, and adoration, forever and ever.

The praise of the angels, however, is not the highest among creatures; for there is among creatures one praise surpassing in fervor that of all the angels and saints. It is the praise, the all-holy and most excellent praise, of the worshipful Virgin. Mother that she is, she sees in her Son God Himself. Hers is the only love of a mother that can take the form of strict adoration. But her praise, too, does not stand alone, separated from the universal chorus of heaven. Even more than any other creature, she is joined in union with the whole multitude of men, whose mother she remains, and with all choirs of angels, whose queen she is by reason of her divine motherhood and her fullness of grace. Better than all others she understands that only one praise and adoration is worthy of the eternal God. It is the praise and adoration of the Word who dwells in the bosom of the Father, who took flesh of her so that He might become the Supreme Pontiff of all creation and offer to the Blessed Trinity an adoration of infinite value and glory. In the presence of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, therefore, the Mother of God has but

one desire, namely, to be one with the whole Church, and together with the Church to be united in the praise and adoration of her Son.

It is only natural, moreover, that the Church on earth should also have recourse to the soul of Christ, so that united with Him she might offer to God the worship and adoration that is due to Him. For, though she cannot gaze on the unveiled glory of God in heaven, even this visible creation in which she is still "exiled from the Lord," [33] is a most wonderful manifestation of His infinite perfections. In addition, through faith she is able to catch a glimpse of the splendors of yet another world, that wholly supernatural world beyond, where God dwells in the light inaccessible of the three divine Persons. From that world shine forth, over all the universe encompassed by the plan of redemption, over all the height and breadth and depth of both heaven and earth—from that world shine forth the power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son, and the merciful love of the Spirit. Hence, even the Church on earth, still walking by faith, has seen and understood enough about the infinite grandeur of God to cause her to exclaim: *"Quis ut Deus?*—Who is like God?" Who indeed? She knows, also, that not even the blessed in heaven, amid the splendors of glory, can ever comprehend in all its height and depth the fullness of the divine Being. The vision of Christ is the one that is best proportioned to the unscalable heights of the mystery of God. Only the soul of Christ, united to the Word, can render God an adoration of infinite value.

In the Mass, then, the Church, mindful of this primordial obligation to offer adoration, first sends up her own praise to God. This she does especially in the Gloria, chanting: *"Laudamus Te, Benedicimus Te, Adoramus Te*—We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee." But throughout she is deeply conscious that by herself alone she cannot sing adequate praise to the infinite grandeur of the triune God. After the Consecration, therefore, in ceremony that is as sublime as it is simple, as soon as Christ has been placed in her hands she offers Him to the

Trinity. Under the sacramental forms symbolizing His immolation on the Cross, she presents to God the Father His own Son. Christ becomes her adoration. Thereby, the oblation of the Church assumes the infinite value of the acts of the Word Incarnate Himself, who adores in her name. He is the adoring, the worshiping, Victim of the sacrifice of the altar.

It may well be wondered how many there are who give any thought to this contemplative and worshiping aspect of the Church on earth; how many who really know and appreciate what the Church does each morning before going forth to be engaged in the hard labors and struggles that confront her every day, what she does when she recollects herself in the silent and worshipful prayer of her Christ in the Mass. These few minutes of silent adoration invest all her daily labors with a value and significance that is truly divine. It is from the soul of Christ that the Church in adoration at Mass learns how to be truly apostolic and coredemptive with Him; how to love, and adore, and serve. And the Christian who comes to Christ in the Mass with the same sentiments as His will also have only one desire: to be himself an adorer of the Father, and all through the day to live by the will of the Father, and together with Christ to immolate himself, too, for the glory of the Father.

3. SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING

Besides being a sacrifice of atonement and adoration, the Mass is also the highest act of thanksgiving offered by the Church in union with Christ. This sentiment of thankfulness is especially evident in the lofty accents of the Preface: "It is fitting indeed and just, right and helpful unto salvation, always and everywhere to give thanks to Thee, holy Lord, Father almighty, eternal God." As her feasts and liturgical seasons unfold and succeed one another, with their beautiful variety, the Church gives thanks to God for the countless blessings received from each of the principal mysteries of the redemption.

Thus, in the Christmas season the Church is thankful for the mystery of the Word made flesh, by which the light of God's glory "hath shone anew upon the eyes of our mind; so that while we acknowledge Him as God seen by men, we may be drawn by Him to the love of things unseen." In Lent the memory of Calvary pervades all. The Church thanks God for having given us His Son on the Cross. At Easter the Church's expression of gratitude is more exultant, revealing her great joy. "It is indeed fitting and just," she sings, "right and helpful unto salvation, that at all times, but more especially on this day, we should extol Thy glory, O Lord, when Christ our Pasch was sacrificed. For He is the true Lamb that hath taken away the sins of the world; who by dying hath overcome our death, and by rising again hath restored our life." On Pentecost the whole world rejoices over the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the children of adoption; and the hosts on high, and the angelic powers, sing the praise of His glory in an unending Sanctus.

As a matter of fact, it is far from fancy to consider the life of the Trinity Itself as one of festive silence and adoration. Quite appropriately, then, does the Church in the Preface turn her thought most attentively to this mystery of mysteries, which she could have come by only through revelation; this mystery of one God in three Persons, of "one God, one Lord, not in the oneness of a single person, but in the Trinity of one substance. . . . So that in confessing the true and everlasting Godhead, we shall adore distinction in persons, oneness in nature"; this mystery of one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: equal all, in majesty, and worthy, all Three, of the same acknowledgment and the same adoration.

After the Preface there is silence. The Church awaits the Word Incarnate, who is about to be present, offering His infinite praise. From the soul of Christ goes forth a measure of gratitude that not merely equals but far outweighs in value, the sum total of all the blessings received by the whole multitude of creatures. In the light of His beatific vision Christ the Priest beholds the

generosity which God in His sovereign munificence shows to all creatures that have come forth from His hands, and, once come forth, are constantly kept in being by His almighty power. The blessings of the redemption, the blessings of grace and of glory, the blessings coming of the hypostatic order: Christ acknowledges them all. He has a just appreciation of all gifts of God, and of all His creatures, from the highest seraphim to the lowliest atom of the universe.

We must search the soul of Christ to understand how deep and how immense is the gratitude that flows from it to His Father. The Son of God thanks His Father because, first of all, He knows with unmatched clarity and certainty that He Himself has received more than any other. He thanks Him for the graces that were His personally as the Word Incarnate, and for all the virtues and charismatic gifts that were included in those graces. He thanks Him for the inexhaustible riches and merits of His grace of headship, which permits Him to act unceasingly and at will on all the members of His mystical body. Christ is deeply conscious that if the Father manifests His goodness and love, His almighty power and mercy, and all His divine perfections, it is only to make Him, the Son Incarnate, the most estimable and the most excellent Being of all the universe; for in Him all the perfections of the universe are combined, placing Him higher than every creature. He is at the summit of creation, yes, at the right hand of the Father. Manifestly, then, Christ's first object of gratitude is Himself and all the natural and supernatural gifts with which He was endowed for His mission as the Christ.

Secondly, Jesus offers thanks to God for all the graces and privileges accorded to His Mother. He thanks Him for her divine motherhood, whose grandeur in a certain respect touches on the infinite, and for her fullness of glory, which establishes her, together with Him and through Him and in Him, as the Mediatress of all graces of the redemption. Next, Christ is grateful to the Father for all the wonders He sees that God has wrought in the angelic universe and in the souls of saints. He is grateful for

the purity of virgins, for the light of understanding of confessors, for the heroic courage of martyrs and the heroic fidelity of the great servants of God, for the perseverance of His elect. Jesus offers thanks to His Father for the countless blessings bestowed on all His Church, the Church militant, the Church suffering, the Church triumphant. In the presence of the Father amid the bright splendors of glory, Christ, the Victim of praise and thanksgiving, gives thanks to God in the name of all that are His. From St. Paul we learn that this sentiment of thanksgiving and acknowledgment in the soul of Christ will perdure to the end of time, when, gathering up His kingdom, Christ will offer it to His Father in a final and unending act of infinite gratitude.

In heaven all the blessed, following Christ their Exemplar, join Him in giving thanks to the Father. The Virgin is foremost in uniting herself with Christ in an eternal Magnificat. She exalts God who is almighty, whose mercy extends from age to age and to all generations, bestowing on them in profusion the gifts of God. The angels and the elect, in turn, unite themselves with the sentiment of gratitude rising from the soul of the Virgin of the Magnificat. But all heaven, the Virgin, the angels, and the saints together, are poignantly aware of their helplessness to give worthy expression of thanks to God. Deeply sensible of the inadequateness of even their combined and collective praise, all turn to Jesus; all unite themselves with the act of thanksgiving that Christ offers from His priestly soul.

Such is the scene in heaven that unfolds when, under the appearances of the host and the wine on the altar, the same Christ as in heaven, in union with His Church on earth, offers adoration and thanksgiving. Christ is the center of this sacrifice, and the foundation of this Church. Indeed, what, one might ask, would she be without Him? Without Him her praise would have no more than human worth. But on the altar of sacrifice the Church offers more than human praise. There she has Christ, and Him she offers to His Father. Her Christ then becomes, so to speak, the living expression of her gratitude. It is through

Christ, therefore, that the Church's thanksgiving is invested with a value that equals, and even surpasses, that of the blessings received. Through this Victim of the sacrifice the Church sends up to God an act of thanksgiving having infinite worth. All her debts to God for redeemed creation are more than remitted through the offering of her Christ. God has given her His own Son. She in turn offers Him back to God. The gratitude equals the gift. God receives infinite glory.

Thus it is that the Mass accomplishes the third purpose of sacrifice, namely, the gratitude and acknowledgment due to God for the gifts He so freely bestows from the bounty of His sovereign goodness and love. No one is exempt from this obligation to render to God thanksgiving and acknowledgment. We cannot plead spiritual poverty. We have no less than Christ. It is from God we have Him, to God to offer Him.

4. SACRIFICE OF SUPPLICATION

Sacrifice of atonement, of adoration, and of thanksgiving, the Mass is also the most powerful prayer that God-fearing men and women can offer to God. In the Mass the Church offers to the Trinity the prayer of Christ Himself. Through her union with Christ she possesses a power of supplication that is, so to speak, irresistible. Furthermore, the Christian who has learned to identify himself with the thoughts and aspirations of the Church when she celebrates the sacrifice of the Mass can find there the greatest abundance and variety of prayers for his own interior life.

In the prayers at the foot of the altar, for example, and in the Kyrie, the Christian humbly confesses his faults and earnestly implores the divine mercy. In the Gloria he has a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. In the collect of the Mass of the day, or in the collect prescribed by the bishop according to the exigencies of time and place, he has the formulation of his daily needs. At the moment when the priest adds a drop of water to the wine in the

chalice, there is the simple but sublime petition that, through Christ, he may be made to share in the divine nature. And when, at the Orate Fratres, the celebrant invites all the faithful present to pray that the sacrifice of the Church may also become their sacrifice, the response that the faithful make, opens the eyes of the soul to the most exalted perspectives: "May the Lord accept the sacrifice at thy hands, unto the praise and glory of His name, for our advantage and that of all His Holy Church." At the end of the Fore-Mass, the Church militant summons the whole Church triumphant to assist her in the praise of the Lord, while at the same time beseeching God that He may deign to have her join with all the choirs of angels and cherubim and seraphim in singing: *"Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus*—Holy, Holy, Holy." After this appeal, addressed to all the angels and saints of paradise, there is nothing more for the Church militant to do except to unite herself with the prayer of Christ Himself.

As soon as Christ is present, a change comes over the Church on earth. Halting her own prayer, she implores God to regard only Him who is present, hidden beneath the host, whose sacrifice is more pleasing to God than all the sacrifices of the Old Law. In the presence of Christ the Church is self-effacing. It is as if she said: "Father, hearken now only to the voice of Thy Son." But she is confident that she, too, will be heard, since on the altar she has Christ Himself, Christ and His prayer.

The prayer of Christ! The words come so easy, but who can pierce the reality? During His life on earth the Son of God was more than once seen retiring from the crowd to seek seclusion in the desert for the sake of prayer. The Gospels, moreover, have recorded the memory of the nocturnal prayers of Christ in Galilee and at Gethsemane. No human mind could hope to penetrate the secret of this intimate meeting of the Son with the Father, in surroundings and settings that are among the marvels of God's creation. Those nights in Palestine, those nights of prayer and adoration! If they had utterance, what could they not tell us of the fervent prayer and earnest supplication that poured from the

soul of our Christ, our Priest, our Supreme Pontiff, throughout the course of His mediatory mission of unceasing prayer and glorification which He performed on behalf of all creation, both living and nonliving. We, too, were there, present in His thoughts, when, for the sake of each of us, Christ sent up His cry for redemption to His Father; when, as St. Paul puts it, "with a loud cry and tears," [34] He offered up prayers and supplications.

Furthermore, though Christ is now in heaven, His prayer is not lessened. On the contrary—and this, also, we have from St. Paul—prayer is now the instrument par excellence by which He conveys to us the effects of His redeeming action. Though beyond the state of merit and expiation, He is still left with the task of applying to us the fruits of His sacrifice. In the present phase of the economy of redemption, it is the prayer of Christ that plays the fundamental role. It is through prayer that Jesus acquires for us from His Father all graces of salvation that He merited through His blood on the Cross. That is why, as St. Paul says, He is always before the Father's presence, making constant intercession for us. His prayer in heaven is inspired by the same thoughts and aspirations as was His life on earth, that is, the obtainment of the Father's glory and the fulfillment of our redemption. Such is the purpose of His unceasing prayer before God.

So great is Christ's concern to glorify the Father that nothing, in a manner of speaking, can turn His attention from it. This glory is promoted by the salvation of the world and by the forward march of the Church militant to the eternal City of God. There is never an instant when Jesus is not watching over His Church with His prayer; when, in the bright vision of glory, He is not imploring His Father to grant her all the graces and helps she needs each day to face the struggles that confront her as the Church militant. For the Church is the City of God in building, in the process of being realized. She is also the City of God on the journey homeward to God. But her ancient enemy is not asleep; he is on the watch, roaming among men and seeking to

lead them astray while yet far from home. As head of the Church the Christ of glory continues to protect her with His all-powerful prayer. Indeed, the certain knowledge that Christ is unceasingly praying for us should be a source of confidence and courage to all, no matter what our difficulties. Each of us can say to himself in all truth that at this moment, before the Father's presence, Christ the Saviour is interceding for him. And His prayer is always heard. It cannot be otherwise.

We see, then, that the Word Incarnate, the spiritual head of the entire Church, is with us day and night through the watchful care and prayer of Christ. He knows our weaknesses and the dangers we face. He knows, too, our faintheartedness on the one hand, as well as our sincere desire to do good on the other. He wants us to be holy, to be saints, and helps us become so by protecting us, through His watchful prayer, from all evil. It was for this that He prayed on earth in these words: "I do not pray that thou take them out of the world, but that thou keep them from evil." [35] This also is His prayer in heaven. "Father," He says in effect, "protect My apostles, protect My virgins, protect My martyrs, protect My priests, especially My priests. Keep them all; keep them steadfast in purity and uprightness, fervent in love, unyielding in faithfulness."

United with the prayer of Christ for us is that of all the angels and the blessed. First and foremost is the prayer of the Mother of all men, the universal Mediatress of all graces, she whose all-powerful supplication, like that of her Son, is always heard. In fact, the Church is so sure that the Mother of Christ is always effectively watching over each Christian that she does not spell out her needs in detail but contents herself with addressing a general petition to the Mother of God, saying simply: "Pray for us sinners." For the Church knows beyond all doubt that the intercession of the Mother of God, who is also a mother to us, will be so heard by God as to bring about what is to our highest and best interests.

In addition, all the elect in heaven are united with Christ and

the Blessed Virgin in unceasing prayer for us. Through the dogma of the Communion of Saints we know that with Christ they seek to form Him in us and in the world. Their power to help is in proportion to the fervor of their love and the price of their merits, and is limited only in a manner and measure determined by God's plan for us. Hence, when the Church militant goes forth each day to take up the battle for God's cause, all heaven is in prayer and combat with us. The Mass, therefore, is the supreme moment when all powers of heaven and earth are united in supplication with Christ to secure the triumph of God. For the man of faith, therefore, it should be a glorious spectacle to see the whole Church united at Mass in the common prayer of the Pater Noster, which the priest at the altar offers up in the name of the whole Church. All the children of God then gathered together are moved by the same filial love and confidence as, in response to the Lord's bidding and together with the Son, they "make bold to say: Our Father."

It is at the Mass above all that this prayer, the Lord's Prayer, assumes its full meaning and import, particularly at the moment when Jesus Himself, present on the altar, prays it with us as one among us. This Pater Noster of the Mass is more than a prayer; it is a complete statement of what our life should be in Christ. In it the Church finds expressed the reason and justification of her existence, the whole and highest purpose of her being, which is the supreme vocation of glorifying God: "Hallowed be Thy name." She also finds expressed her desire for holiness: "Thy kingdom come"; her earnest resolution to serve God solely according to the designs of His providence: "Thy will be done"; her magnanimity in regard to her enemies: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us"; her consciousness of her own weakness, but also the confidence that she will receive from God the grace to have the strength and discernment that are necessary for her life of struggle and combat: "Give us this day our daily bread"; her fear lest she displease God, but a fear inspired by filial love and reverence: "And lead us not

into temptation"; her calm tranquillity despite the thousand and one unforeseeable dangers to which her existence on earth is liable: "Deliver us from all evil." This last petition is elaborated in the prayer that follows: "Deliver us, O Lord, we beseech Thee, from all evils, past, present, and to come; and through the intercession of the blessed and glorious Mary ever Virgin, Mother of God, together with Thy blessed apostles, Peter and Paul and Andrew, and all the Saints, grant of Thy goodness, peace in our days, that aided by the help of Thy mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all disturbance."[8]

In this sublime prayer which the Church, in union with Christ, addresses to God the Father, her whole life and soul is expressed. The Mass, then, as this prayer admirably sets forth, is the total Christ in prayer before the presence of God.

5. SUSCIPE SANCTA TRINITAS

The immediate ends of sacrifice are expiation, adoration, thanksgiving, and supplication; but these ends are ordained to a still higher end, namely, to the glory of the Blessed Trinity. The Mass, therefore, is also the highest act of Christian worship that is offered to the adorable Trinity.

On the whole, we ought to give more thought and attention to the fact that all Christian mysteries have a Trinitarian reference. We know full well that the Holy Trinity is the principal mystery of our faith, and that all others depend on it, whether, to mention just a few, it be the Incarnation, the Redemption, the mystery of the Church herself, or the dogma of the Communion of Saints, by which all members of Christ's mystical body are united with one another.

God the creator, we profess in the Credo of the Mass, is the Father almighty, whose Son was made flesh, and who directs souls to the highest degrees of holiness through His Spirit of love. Thus, our basic dogmas bring us into immediate relationship with a God who is Father, a Son who was made man to save us,

and a sanctifying Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Three, moreover, are One in the unity of one nature in three Persons, possessing undivided the same essence, the same power, the same wisdom, the same life.

We are baptized in the name of the Trinity and confirmed by receiving the Spirit whom the Son sends to us from the right hand of the Father. We partake of a communion that gives us possession of the Word. We offer to God the sacrifice of Christ for the glory of the Trinity.

At the altar, the first gesture of the priest, which is the sign of the cross, and the first words are solemn notification that in this sacrifice all that is done, is done "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." All the prayers of the Mass, all the doxologies, all the formulas of the liturgy, profess our belief in the Trinity. The Kyrie addresses a threefold supplication to each of the three divine Persons in succession. The Gloria sings praise to the Father almighty, King of heaven; and to the only-begotten Son, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, who alone is holy, who alone is Lord, together with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of the Father. The Credo is a further profession of faith in the Trinity, and this is even more glowingly proclaimed in the threefold Sanctus. Furthermore, the excellent prayer that precedes the communion of the priest underscores the intimate association of all three Persons of the Trinity in their common work of our redemption: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who by the Father's will, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, hast given life to the world through Thy own death . . ." And at the end of the Mass, in the prayer before the last blessing, the Church again solemnly affirms that it is with the intention of pleasing the Holy Trinity that she offers this sacrifice in the name of all.

But there is one gesture in the liturgy of the Mass that expresses more strikingly perhaps than any other Trinitarian design of the mystery of the altar. It takes place during the Offertory when the priest, in the name of the Church, holding in

his hands both the chalice and the paten and raising his eyes to heaven, offers, in the name of the Church, both the chalice and the host while reciting the prayer *Suscipe Sancta Trinitas.*[37] In this prayer the Church declares to the faithful, in the most explicit manner possible, that the sacrifice of the Mass is the offering up of Christ to the Trinity.

All this, however, is only the external rite of the mystery of the Mass. The sacred symbolism of the Mass is not an end in itself. Its purpose is to make us see beyond the external rites, and to become aware of the real and mysterious presence of Christ, who through His human nature becomes in the Mass, as He is in heaven, the Priest and Victim of the Trinity.

It is imperative to grasp well this mystery of the priesthood of Christ. It would, for example, be an egregious misconception to think of Christ as one apart from the Trinity, as though He Himself were not one of the Three. The fact is that He abides as Son in the bosom of the Father, and from Him proceeds the Spirit by whom the Father and the Son are perfected in unity. In all our faith, if there is one aspect that needs to be stressed again and again, one that cannot be contemplated often enough, it is the divinity of Christ. This needs especially to be remembered during the mystery of His death that is perpetuated in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Christ is God, equal, by His divine nature, to His Father. Through the incarnation He took on our nature and our afflictions, but He did not on that account lose any of His divine prerogatives and perfections. Even in the flesh He remains the Son of God and the Principle, by the same token as the Father, of a Spirit who, like Father and Son, is God. It is only by taking our stand, resolutely and unhesitatingly, on the divine nature of our high priest that we can discern the infinite grandeur of His eternal priesthood. We have, as St. Paul declares, "a great high priest . . . Jesus, the Son of God." [38]

In Jesus, therefore, we have a God-Priest, God by reason of His divine nature, priest in virtue of His human nature. He is priest for us, the one Mediator of all graces that come from the

Trinity to mankind; the one who acts as intermediary for all the thoughts and aspirations of the members of His mystical body; the one who in His own right has access to the throne of God and who can, so to speak, represent us in the councils of the Trinity, speaking for us on all matters pertaining to our salvation. Since His is a two-way mediation, going both from God to men and from men to God, He is always in intimate converse with both God and men. So excellent and perfect, moreover, is His priesthood that the sacrifice in blood on Calvary needed to be offered by Him but once, its value being infinite and lasting for all ages. His redeeming sacrifice by blood, therefore, does not admit of renewal or repetition. The Church has only to apply its merits through the medium of the sacramental rite instituted by Christ. In that way the fruits of this sacrifice are imparted to all men of all generations in unlimited measure, to each according to his degree of love and devotion.

Before His Father's presence in heaven, the Christ-God is no longer in the lowly and humiliated state to which He had been reduced in Gethsemane and on Golgotha. Now He appears in the full splendor of His almighty power, in the glory and triumph of His redemption. Seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, He awaits the moment when, after the history of the world has run its course, all men and all nations will be brought to His final and full submission.

Strictly speaking, therefore, in heaven there is no longer sacrifice, but only the expectation of the consummation of all things, a consummation that is to be brought about in dependence on, and through the power of, the fruits of Christ's eternal priesthood. Nor is there any longer a victim of blood as on Calvary. Nor immolation in figure and sacrament as at the Last Supper and on the altar. There is only a Christ who dies no more, and the bright vision and contemplation of all the thoughts and sentiments in His soul, the soul of the Word Incarnate. There is only Christ the Adorer of the Father, the Mediator who is always heard, who is able to obtain the application of all the merits He

has gained, Christ the Suppliant, who is constantly in the presence of the Father to offer thanks in the name of all the blessed, and to intercede in behalf of those on earth until the day when the fullness of the total Christ shall have arrived and the universe itself, having entered into the glory of God, will be all in all.

The elect in heaven are filled with awe and admiration in beholding the only-begotten Son, now in His glory. At the hour of what seemed, to the eyes of the world, His inglorious and ignominious Passion, He had been made to be "a little lower than the angels." [39] Now He appears to the blessed in the full resplendence of His divine majesty, reposing in the bosom of the Father and being, with Him, the principle of a God who is their eternal love. In the clear light of the beatific vision, undimmed by shadow or darkness, they see that the Son of God is equal to His Father, indeed, but that He is also, by reason of His fullness of grace as the Word Incarnate, the one Priest of redeemed mankind; and not only of mankind, but of all creation, since it is "through Him" that the angelic spirits themselves offer to the most Blessed Trinity all worship and adoration that is made in spirit and truth. All religion in heaven as well as on earth is mediated by Christ. It is with Him, through Him, and in Him, that all the saints and angels adore and give thanks and make supplication. True God and true man, Christ Himself receives the praise and glory of all inasmuch as He is God, while, since His incarnation, He also exists as one of them, subject to His Father, Priest and Mediator forever.

Through faith the Church on earth participates in this eternal liturgy of heaven; she is united with this one and only worship of all creation, offered through Christ to the triune God. As a sacramental sacrifice, the Mass is adapted to her condition of being a Church militant, still walking by faith, exiled from the Lord. The Mass is the means par excellence by which she may unite herself with all the thoughts and aspirations that dwell in the worshipful and priestly soul of Christ. Whatever is wrought by the blessed in the light of glory, that also is done, in her own way

and amid the shadows of faith, by the Church still walking by faith. But it is one and the same worship and adoration that is offered by the whole Church of Christ.

Like the angels and saints in heaven, the Church militant keeps her attention steadfastly focussed on the Trinity. "*Suscipe Sancta Trinitas*—Accept, O most Holy Trinity." That is the keynote of her worship. Her work of expiation, of adoration, of thanksgiving, of supplication, it all reduces to one, namely, to the offering of Christ to the Trinity. That comprises her entire cult, which is substantially identical with the unique sacrifice of the Christian religion that was inaugurated by Jesus on the Cross and is perpetuated in the Eucharistic host. If we but had such faith as to make the Mass for each of us what it truly is, that is, the offering of the total Christ to the Trinity, with what fervor should we not pour forth our prayers and our praise! We should really see and understand that Jesus is there, immolating Himself for the glory of the Father, and offering us with Himself. Indeed, the whole key to assisting at Mass consists in offering oneself with Christ. That is the way to live the Mass. That is the way to make it for us what it is intended to be, namely, the act of offering oneself, with Christ and through the Church, as a victim to the Trinity.

6. VICTIM OF THE TRINITY

A victim of the Trinity is a soul that lives by faith, a soul which, passing by all things visible, has fixed its abode in God, in the company of the three divine Persons, sharing with Them the same life of light, of love, and gladness. Enlightened by faith, it sees the history of the world and the happenings of its own life as a manifestation of the divine will, whose eternal designs are realized even in the most minute details of the universe. It knows that the highest grace that can come from our configuration to Christ is the grace to live the Cross, and that the dark nights of the Church militant are as a light illuminating the path of souls

in their upward journey to the immutable and beatifying Trinity.

A victim of the Trinity is a soul that lives in total abandonment to God, avoiding both undue anxiety and careless indifference; a soul intent on performing throughout each day whatever good, great or small, lies in its power to do; a soul solicitous only for the glory of God, and possessed of the joyous inner freedom and the unbounded trust that mark the true children of God.

A victim of the Trinity is a soul that lives in pure and unselfish love, a love that is nourished from the Cross. Pure and unselfish love means to be at every moment intimately united with God, allowing nothing to divert one's attention from the task of seeking and loving God. Whatever such a soul does—a routine daily task or some outstanding deed—all that matters for it is how much love it can bring to the performance. It is firmly convinced that at the end of life it will be judged on love. For the greatest commandment of God is: Thou shalt love. The favorite reading of such a soul is from the Gospels, since these are the book that speaks pre-eminently of love. Under the tutelage of St. Paul, moreover, it has acquired the certain knowledge that nothing is a hindrance to those who are resolved to live by love. But it has also learned from the Saviour that true love is that which sacrifices itself and gives its all. That is why the ideal it pursues is to be a victim, to give itself for love.

A victim of the Trinity is a soul that is aflame with apostolic zeal for bringing the redemption to complete fulfillment; a soul that wants only to share in all the sufferings of Christ so as to share with Him in saving the world and be a victim with Christ for the good of the Church.

A victim of the Trinity is a soul possessed of spiritual insight, a soul that bases all its decisions on the knowledge that comes from the Cross. Through the gift of counsel it has learned that holiness consists neither in ecstasies nor in any other form of extraordinary experiences, but simply in accomplishing, for the sake of love, the duties of one's state of life. No matter how

tangled the circumstances of a given life, such a soul can always discern the will of God and help to achieve it. Hence, persons that are under its care or come under its influence will readily follow it in its upward journey to God. Under the guidance of the Church, such a soul goes forward with perfect assurance, treading in the footsteps of Christ along that path that leads to God. Its life, in short, is an unceasing going up to the Trinity.

A victim of the Trinity is a soul dedicated to adoration and reparation, a soul of prayer and praise. Each morning in its daily Communion at the Eucharistic sacrifice, it identifies itself with all the movements that stir in the soul of Christ. Its program of life is dictated by the expression of St. Paul that Christ offered Himself as a victim—words which express the most central aspect of the mystery of the Redemption. Such a soul, too, wants to offer itself to the Trinity, to be a victim with the Victim.

A victim of the Trinity is a crucified soul, faithful to God even in the smallest matters, not a slave to detail, but also not guilty of negligence or indifference; a soul seeking, like Christ, to do the will of the Father down to the last iota. Following the example of the Queen of Martyrs, such a soul does its duty to the end. To the heroism of greatness it prefers the heroism of smallness, since the latter may be more in accord with its own limitations, and often brings greater glory to God through being motivated by greater self-forgetfulness. Its greatest desire is to live by love, so it may die for love. Of all forms of suffering, it chooses total abandonment, like that of Christ crucified at the hands of the Father, a martyr to love.

A victim of the Trinity is a soul that is pure, free from all evil, a virginal creature whose powers of love are all kept intact for Christ alone. It is a soul of inner calm and repose, aggrieved no more by the things of this world; a soul like that of the Blessed Virgin, keeping itself holy and immaculate in love, to be pleasing only to God. A victim of the Trinity, then, is a Marian soul, to whom God has revealed the secret of living in Mary, the better to live in Christ.

To be a victim of the Trinity, therefore, is to bring to utmost fruition the grace of baptism, and to turn all the circumstances of one's life into so many opportunities to be made holy and God-like through Christ. Such an ideal is not beyond the many. If a soul so desires, there is nothing to prevent it from being every moment in communion with the inmost life of the Trinity. One has only to act as a Christian in each of one's actions and to approach everything with the mind and heart of Christ. For to be a victim of the Trinity is to be merged, made one, with the soul of Christ.

In fine, to be a victim of the Trinity is to follow in the footsteps of the Virgin of the Incarnation, being, as she was and in the measure of one's calling, crucified with Christ, coredeeming with Christ; it is to be one with all the thoughts and aspirations of the only-begotten Son of the Father, and, through her, to allow oneself to be made perfect with Christ in the unity of the Trinity.

7. ACT OF OFFERING ONESELF AS VICTIM TO THE TRINITY [40]

O beatifying Trinity, living in divine tranquillity, highest source of understanding, of love, and steadfast peace, all things in heaven and on earth and under the earth are ordained unto the praise and glory of Thy name. I wish to be united with the unceasing praise of the Word, with the praise that Christ pours forth to Thee from the depths of His soul. Through Him, with Him, and in Him, therefore, and in imitation of the Virgin of the Incarnation and through her most pure hands, I offer myself as a victim of the Trinity.

Father most beloved, through my baptismal grace of adoption I became Thy child. Watch Thou over me. Let no deliberate fault of mine tarnish, ever so lightly, the purity of my soul. Grant that with each day I may become more and more devoted and faithful to Thee, and ever go forward in my upward journey to Thee, having in my heart the complete filial abandonment of a

child that knows itself loved with the tender love of an all-powerful Father.

O Word, eternal thought of my God, figure of His substance and splendor of His glory, Thou art the only light of understanding I desire. Illumine the darkness of my life with the light of Thy life. May I walk steadfast in faith, ever more docile and responsive to the illuminations from Thy wisdom and Thy understanding and Thy knowledge, until that day when, in the presence of the radiant brightness of Thy divine countenance, all light that is not Thee shall be no more.

O Holy Spirit, Thou that joinest the Father and the Son in one unending blessedness, teach me to live at every moment and in every circumstance of my life in intimate union with my God, so that I may be made ever more perfect in the unity of the Trinity. And above all, bestow on me Thy spirit of love to inspire even the least of my actions with Thy holiness, so that in the Church I may truly be, for the redemption of souls and the glory of the Father, a victim of love unto praise of the Trinity.

O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, living and creative Trinity that leadeth all beings of the universe mightily yet sweetly to their eternal destiny, deign that I may share in the fruitfulness of Thy action. Grant that my soul be like the soul of Christ the Redeemer.

May my life be lived entirely in the supernatural realm of the redemption, fully aware that even in the least details of a human life God's eternal purpose is manifested. Enlightened by Thy inspirations and helped by Thy grace, may I resolve to be, in the measure of my calling and wherever Thy will has placed me, a coredemptive soul with Christ, sharing with Him in the wondrously fruitful action of the Trinity in the world.

May all my actions be filled with the justice that safeguards the rights of God above all, so that in every circumstance He may be served first. May all my actions be motivated, too, by the sentiment of brotherly love toward all men, giving each his due,

but always in the spirit of charity, as becomes the children of the same Father that awaits us all in heaven.

Grant that I may have a strength of soul that cannot be conquered. Make my love of Thee as strong as death. Never let my will give way before duty. Let nothing abate my zeal for Thy service. Inspire me with the courage to seek the great and heroic ideals, and to pursue them, if need be, to the point of martyrdom, all for the greater glory of Thy name.

I implore Thee to grant my soul to be clear and pure as crystal, worthy to be a living temple of the Trinity. O most holy God, keep my soul united with Christ, and all its power to love intact for Christ; keep it eager to share unceasingly in Thy infinite holiness. May its journey through this sinful world find it ever holy and immaculate in love, attentive only to Thy presence, pleasing only in Thy sight, without the least spot or blemish to stain in it the luster of Thy beauty.

And you, *O Virgin most pure,* Mother of God and mother of the total Christ, you whose essential mission it still is to bring Jesus to the world, make my soul like unto that of Christ. Grant me to be united with all the thoughts and aspirations of the Word, so that in the eyes of the Father each of my actions may reflect Christ.

Like you, I want to be a victim for the Church, loving her to being ready to die for her, cherishing her with the same love as Christ Himself.

Handmaid of the Father, Mother of the Son, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, unite me, according to the capacity of my soul, with the whole mystery of your own life, the mystery identical with that of Christ. After Jesus, you are the highest exemplar of all holiness, the ideal of all souls who want to be victims of the Trinity in the Church, for the redemption of the world and the greater glory of God.

After this life that passes away, when for me the shadows of earth shall have vanished, may my life in eternity be spent in the

presence of God, in unceasing praise and glory of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

8. LIKE THE DROP OF WATER IN THE CHALICE

What a difference we should find in our Mass if the faith we vocalize were made to penetrate the depths of our heart and mind! What a new value we should discover in it if, with our thoughts fixed on the Trinity, we were really and truly to identify ourselves, through love, with all the thoughts and desires that animated the soul of Christ crucified! The Mass would then be seen to be what it is in reality, namely, the sole sacrifice of redemption, perpetuated among men under the form of a liturgical rite, for the purpose of making them holy after the image of the Son; but perpetuated also, and even especially, so that the Church militant might send up to God from her inmost heart the unceasing prayer, thanksgiving, expiation, and adoration that dwell in the soul of Jesus and in the heart of the Church of the Word Incarnate.

How many are aware of these sublime and exalted perspectives when present at the Holy Sacrifice? How many realize that the Mass reaches far beyond this world, that it unites the whole Church, the Church on earth and the Church in heaven, in the highest act of the priesthood of the Word, as He offers to His Father the total Christ united in one common work of glorifying the Trinity?

Christ is there. Through His eternal priesthood He makes up for our powerlessness to give adequate glory to God. How should we deport ourselves at this exalted moment when the sacrifice of the altar is being offered? What is the best way to assist at the Mass? Our question is not about external helps, such as the missal. Our question is about the interior sentiments that we should seek to realize in our hearts.

There is one ceremony of the Mass in which the Church herself indicates, perhaps more so than anywhere else, the highest

ideal we can seek at the Mass. It is the ceremony at the Offertory, when the priest pours a drop or two of water into the wine in the chalice. This small ceremony is not only one of the most ancient of the Mass but also one of the most strikingly significant and symbolical. It is as if the Church said that just as the drop of water is mingled with and loses its identity in the wine, so should our souls seek to be merged with the soul of Christ and our sentiments assimilated to the innermost sentiments of the Word Incarnate. And even as the drop of water is offered with the wine, so should we, like the Virgin at the foot of the cross of her Son, "through Him, and with Him, and in Him," offer ourselves as a victim of praise to the adorable Trinity.

Notes to Chapter Five

[1] Luke 1:77.
[2] I John 3:5.
[3] I John 2:2.
[4] Heb. 9:26.
[5] Heb. 9:22.
[6] I Pet. 1:19.
[7] I Tim. 2:6.
[8] Eph. 1:7.
[9] I Cor. 15:3.
[10] I Pet. 2:24.
[11] St. Thomas speaks of atonement for sins as the "*foremost* cause of the divine Incarnation" (*Contra Gentiles*,IV,55).
[12] "May this offering, we beseech Thee, O Lord, cleanse us of all our sins; which on the altar of the Cross also took away the sins of the whole world" (Secret, Mass of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, according to the Dominican Rite).
[13] Rom. 8:29.
[14] Heb. 10:14.
[15] Col. 3:1.
[16] Heb. 4:16.
[17] Cf. Heb. 7:25.
[18] Prayer following the Consecration.
[19] "For, appeased by the offering of this sacrifice, God in His mercy,

granting the grace and gift of repentance, forgives even the most enormous sins and offenses" (Council of Trent, Sess.xxii, cap.2).

[20] Luke 23:43.

[21] Offertory prayer.

[22] Canon: Commemoration of the Living.

[23] Prayer following the Pater Noster.

[24] See the prayer at the second ablution.

[25] See prayer before the last blessing.

[26] Cf. Apoc. 4:10.

[27] John 4:23.

[28] Matt. 11:27.

[29] Canon: Commemoration of the Church Triumphant.

[30] Vesper hymn for the office of the Dedication.

[31] Apoc. 7:14.

[32] See the Common Preface.

[33] II Cor. 5:6.

[34] Heb. 5:7.

[35] John 17:15.

[36] Prayer following the Pater Noster.

[37] The author is describing the action as performed in the Mass of the Dominican rite. In the Roman rite the priest at this point, bowing before the middle of the altar, recites the prayer.—Translator's note.

[38] Heb. 4:14.

[39] Ps. 8:6; quoted in Heb. 2:7.

[40] The foregoing pages, titled "Victim of the Trinity," were published separately and in advance of this work and represent an attempt to outline a program of life centered on the theme of victimhood in the Trinity. The content of these pages found speedy acceptance among the faithful generally as well as in many monasteries and convents; so much so that we have been asked to supply a formula that might serve each morning as an act of offering oneself in union with Christ at the Mass as a "victim of the Trinity." In this formula, let it be noted, prime emphasis is placed on the fact that even the highest mystical life must be based on the solid and indispensable foundation of the essential Christian theological and moral virtues: namely, faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

CHAPTER SIX

Penance: The Forgiveness of Christ

SUMMARY: 1. Our Condition as Sinners. . . . 2. Original Sin. . . . 3. The Sins of the Human Race. . . . 4. Our Personal Sins. . . . 5. The Mercy of Christ. . . . 6. The Sacrament of Our Reconciliation. . . . 7. The Conversion of the Soul. . . . 8. The Fuller Meaning of Expiation. . . . 9. Seeking the Summits.

Penance is the sacrament of divine mercy through which Christ is permanently present among sinners.

BAPTISM, confirmation, and the Eucharist would be all that is needed for our spiritual life if, alas, we were not sinners, poor, wretched sinners. With the help of these sacraments the Christian would go steadily forward in his journey to God. Baptism made him a child of God and admitted him to intimate converse with the family of the three divine Persons. Confirmation strengthened him with the strength of the Spirit of God Himself, making him a soldier of Christ and a champion of the faith. Thus endowed, he should find each Eucharistic Communion advancing his spiritual journey, never stopping or halting until his transforming union with Christ is consummated. This is what we should expect—if men were not sinners.

1. OUR CONDITION AS SINNERS

It takes but one glance at the world to see that the reality is quite different. The fact is that we belong to a sinful race, and live in a sin-laden world. An immense and grotesque shadow of evil extends from one end of creation to the other, hovering over the entire work of God's hands. Lucifer, the most exalted of the angelic spirits, sought to be wholly self-sufficient, possessing

equality with God. Yielding to his all-devouring pride, he fell, and with him fell a numerous host of angels. Having become spirits of darkness and enemies of God, all of these fallen angels are now in continuous revolt against Him. Each of their acts is one of rebellion, each a mortal sin.

These same spirits of evil, moreover, have the prime responsibility for the fall of Adam and Eve, and ever since the Fall their aim and effort has been to bring down ruin on all the descendants of Adam. That is why, for example, St. Peter speaks of the devil as a roaring lion, prowling among men, "seeking someone to devour." [1] And St. Paul admonishes us that "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the Principalities and Powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness on high." [2] Happily, in this warfare against sin, God is always on our side, always our stanchest ally.

2. ORIGINAL SIN

By faith we know that original sin is the remote, but also the deepest, source of all evil that comes from within ourselves. We inherit from our first parents a fallen nature, and it is most important to have an accurate appraisal of the burden of sin that rests so heavily on this nature. The Church through her teaching in the matter cautions us against adopting either of two extreme views. On the one hand we must avoid the error of Luther and the Jansenists, both of whom exaggerated the consequences of original sin; and on the other hand we must guard against the error of the Pelagians, who minimized these consequences. But the modern world goes infinitely beyond either view. In its estimate of human nature it tends to ignore altogether, if not to deny outright, the fact of original sin. This is an enormous, an egregious error.

It is the common teaching of Catholic theology that original sin produced four principal effects in human nature, effects so deeply rooted that the inner harmony with which it was endowed

in the beginning has been broken. These effects are: 1) ignorance in the understanding, 2) malice in the will, 3) weakness, and 4) inordinate desire in matters relating to the sense appetite in all of its aspects. Human nature is no longer intact. Man is born a child of wrath,[3] in a state of sin. So true is this that the principal role of Christ's redemption and His grace will be to heal, step by step, all the effects of the wounds which this sin produced in us.

As to the *understanding* of man, it has lost its capacity to find and follow, freely and without effort, the light of truth. Instead, it has to walk haltingly, groping for light as in the dark, faced with a thousand and one possibilities of falling into error. For example, practically speaking a thorough knowledge of God is an achievement that lies beyond the reach of most men. Either they lack sufficient intelligence, or they are spiritually and mentally lazy, or they do not have the time or the inclination to devote themselves to the intellectual pursuit of things pertaining to God.

Man's *will,* also, instead of eagerly embracing the true good, inclines toward evil. It is impossible for fallen man not to stumble again and again into small faults of carelessness and neglect; nor can he, without the help of grace, avoid even those serious moral lapses which jeopardize the very foundations of his friendship with God.

In addition, fallen man is such a prey to *faintheartedness* that he recoils from difficult tasks. He no longer has the heart to venture great and heroic enterprises, being too afraid to meet with hazard or failure. And when, as all men must, he finds himself face to face with death, instead of accepting it heroically, with all his heart he rebels against it.

As for his *sense appetite,* that is almost the plaything of any and every evil desire. Not that his nature is evil and corrupt in itself; but the seat of evil dwells in him in the form of unwholesome tendencies which his reason no longer completely dominates, as even the pagan philosophers knew. Before the Fall

these disorderly inclinations were kept in complete submission to the law of God by the grace man had as part of the patrimony of the state of innocence. Since the Fall, however, as every man knows from his own experience, there is almost no end to the weaknesses he has to contend with in his sense appetite. And, indeed, one of the most characteristic elements of Christian moral teaching is its strong consciousness of this impairment in all human nature.

3. THE SINS OF THE HUMAN RACE

Man's inner conflict, which resulted from original sin and inclines him toward evil, would be a sufficient burden by itself. But the fact is that in one way or another it has been aggravated for each of us by all the sins that the human race has committed during the course of history. In a very real sense there weighs heavily on each of us not only the heritage of original sin but also the burden of sin of our natural heredity. In other words, because of their heredity some men are naturally more predisposed (but not determined) to lust or drunkenness; others to violence or slothfulness; and still others to other excesses of passion. This is not mere fancy. You have only to go into a medical laboratory or clinic, or to any hospital. There you will find all the evidence you need to get an idea of the appalling blemishes that our race suffers from its own sins.

4. OUR PERSONAL SINS

To the effects produced by original sin, and to the defects stemming from heredity, must of course be added the consequences of our personal sins. Through these, our condition as sinners is still further aggravated. Whether we realize it or not, every serious moral lapse leaves in the soul an inexorable mark, a woeful repercussion. There are ever so many men and women in whom the secret scars of their first sin persist even to old age.

Abyssus abyssum invocat. Sin calls to sin. Only one who has seen for himself the awful condition of a man in whom lust, murder, and ambition dwell together, can properly appreciate to what extent the moral debasement of a man may go and how helpless and unmoved the will of the inveterate sinner appears to be in face of the good. When one looks at certain individuals who are morally twisted and depraved, one cannot help feeling he is in the presence of monsters of immorality. Nothing can move their hearts—neither the threat of hell nor the hope of heaven, nor considerations of family ties and affection, nor any other human or humane appeal. Such individuals make us see to what depths of moral depravity the human conscience can sink without the grace of God. How many there are, both men and women, who wear a pleasant smile and the best perfume, but whose hands have been drenched in the blood of secret murder.

Even the life of a respectable and respected man is often attended by secret vices. What, then, shall we say of the hordes of worldlings who fling themselves openly and unashamed into the frenzy of unbridled licentiousness, of those whose only slogan is "Pleasure, pleasure, and more pleasure!" If one could suddenly draw the veil that hides them, and expose to the full light of day all the crimes and iniquities of every imaginable sort that are committed in the secret haunts of our modern metropolises—Paris, London, New York, and any number of others—crimes that wear the veneer of culture and refinement, if, I say, all this wickedness were suddenly exposed to our eyes, it would literally terrify us.

St. John observed with sorrow that "the whole world is in the power of the evil one," [4] and living under the mark of sin. If this was true of his day, where would he find speech to describe our world? Ours is a world of manifold paganism, tenaciously hanging like a vast and grim shadow over immense multitudes of men not yet evangelized, a world of heresies and schisms, which have rent the seamless cloak of Christ's Church down through the centuries, a world in which the spirit materialism prevails

throughout and apostasy among the nations is on the increase, a world that is so proud of its scientific discoveries, yet only leaves the souls of men spiritually and morally impoverished—in the words of St. Paul, a world without Christ and without God.[5] One might wish that the picture were not so dismal, and our civilization not so corrupted. But truth is inexorable; the facts cannot be blinked.

Even in so-called Catholic countries, how many men and women are unremittingly faithful to Christ? If we except those who die in infancy or early childhood, while yet in their innocence, how many Christians go through life without grievously desecrating, again and again, their baptismal holiness? If heaven received only those who have never been guilty of grievous sins, it would be well-nigh empty. Even among the saints we find ever so many who lost and had to regain the life of Christ through the tears of repentance, men and women who fell and had to rise again, as did St. Peter, who denied his Master on the night of his ordination, and Mary, the sinful woman of Magdala, from whom Christ drove out seven devils, and St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and many others.

But we are no better. If we were honest with ourselves, what could we say except that we, too, are poor, wretched sinners, more blameworthy even than many others, that we, too, had strayed far from the fold of Christ, like the lost sheep of the parable, and were rescued and saved only by the mercy of God. For, instead of clinging steadfast to our faith, we have often faltered, vacillating between good and evil. We have obdurately preferred our own mind against the manifest will of God. Sometimes we have rashly presumed on the goodness of God, and sometimes we have gone to the opposite extreme, failing to trust in His goodness. We have been selfish and self-seeking when we should have lived solely for the glory of God, loving with a love that is pure and disinterested. We have planned our life as we wanted it, instead of conforming it to the spirit of the gospel and the clear lessons of the Cross. We have seen where our duty lay,

yet we have daily shirked and cowered. Sensuality, gluttony, lust, self-love—we know them all. We are guilty of the same cowardliness as others, we have kindled in us the same fires of passion as others; in a word, we share with all others the common lot of being sinners.

This we have done. This we are. And out of all this God wants to make—saints!

5. THE MERCY OF CHRIST

Christ our Saviour knew very well what sort of material He had, as it were, to build His Church. He knew how weak and vulnerable is the will of man. Indeed, is not this very fact the glory of the Church, that of sinners she makes saints? The whole economy of our redemption bears the mark of divine mercy. On the day of the Fall, Adam received the first assurances of mercy from the mouth of God Himself, together with the promise of a redeemer. The Prophets and the other books of the Old Testament abound with instances of divine mercy toward sinful but repentant man.

Yet it was with the coming of Christ that the mercy of God toward sinful man was most strikingly manifested. The gospel makes this abundantly clear. Quoting Isaias, it declares that "the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light; and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, a light has arisen." [6] Speaking again of the Saviour, it says in the words of the same Isaias: "Behold, my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will declare judgment to the Gentiles. He will not wrangle, nor cry aloud, neither will anyone hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoking wick he will not quench . . . and in his name will the Gentiles hope." [7] The Messias will be "meek and humble of heart." [8] In His mercy He will call unto Himself all who are burdened and oppressed.[9] "Come to me," He says, "all you who labor and are burdened,

and I will give you rest. . . . and you will find rest for your souls." [10] The Son of God will be seen moving among the common people, among the lowly and the poor, freely accosted and addressed by the poverty-stricken, by the distressed and forlorn, even by women of evil repute. His enemies, the scribes and Pharisees, scornful and pretending to be scandalized, will complain to His disciples: "Why does your master eat with publicans and sinners?" But all they get for their pains is this most noble reply from Jesus Himself: "It is not the healthy who need a physician, but they who are sick. . . . I have come to call sinners, not the just." [11]

This coming to save sinners is in fact the whole mystery of Jesus as Saviour. The mystery of Christ is, above all, a mystery of mercy. Jesus Himself said as much: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." [12] In all the gospel there are no other words that could give us more insight into the secret designs of God's mercy. None less than God Himself humbled Himself, to be lowly as we. He came: *venit*. His will was determined, He resolved to save all, since all had been lost. His only purpose was salvation. And how would He accomplish it? He Himself would go in search of His lost sheep, so that not even one should escape Him. He will hasten after those who are gone astray, calling each by his name. And having found them, He will lay them upon His shoulders and bring them back to the green pastures of life. Through the incarnation of the Word, God Himself came down to us, came down to seek and to save what was lost. This is the whole meaning and substance of the incarnation and the redemption. The very name of Jesus epitomizes His whole mystery as the Christ: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." [13]

The manner in which the Word Incarnate dealt with sinners bears witness to the inexpressible mercies of our Saviour. He pardoned the woman taken in adultery and the Samaritan woman and Mary of Magdala. And when it came to choosing apostles and disciples, He selected them from among earthly minded

men, men who were "slow of heart to believe," [14] who on the eve of the Passion abandoned Him, all of them, in cowardly fashion. At the provocation of a mere maidservant, Peter denied Him, cursing and swearing that he knew Him not. Yet it was on this same Peter that Christ built His Church, this impregnable Church against which "the gates of hell shall not prevail." [15] The entire history of the redemption is filled with instances of such gratuitous predilection displayed by the Son of God toward sinners.

If this is true of sinners as a whole, it is twice true of those in whom He found a will quickened by love and firm of resolution. Then He poured out in superabundance the marvels of His grace and His mercy. To the woman taken in adultery and brought before Him, He spoke no reproach, but, knowing the weakness of her human nature, simply exhorted her to "sin no more." [16] To the Samaritan woman, who turned to Him in expectation of that mysterious water of grace of which He was the source, He made known, in familiar exchange of words, His identity as the Christ. She wanted to know about the Messias; and Jesus confided to her: "I who speak with thee am he." [17] And forthwith He changed this common woman into a worshipper of the Father, "in spirit and in truth." As for the sinner of Magdala, she was not brought to Christ forcibly, like the woman taken in adultery; nor did Christ meet her by chance, like the Samaritan woman. No, the Magdalene came running to Him, a new, a consuming love in her heart; and the Son of God wrought such transformation in her that she became a masterwork of His redemption, second only to the Virgin Mary.

The Apostles and first disciples of Christ evidenced this same awareness of the divine mercy, an awareness that is so prominent in the gospel. Thus, in his Epistle to the Romans St. Paul asks: "For why did Christ, at the set time, die for the wicked when as yet we were weak?" St. Paul not only asks the question, but answers it with his usual earnestness: "For scarcely in behalf of a just man does one die; yet perhaps one might bring himself to

die for a good man. But God commends his charity towards us, because when as yet we were sinners, Christ died for us. . . . we are justified by his blood. . . . For . . . when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." [18] In one form or another this same thought, which is basic to his teaching, is repeated in his other Epistles. Thus, in the Epistle to the Ephesians he writes: "God, who is rich in mercy, by reason of his very great love wherewith he has loved us even when we were dead by reason of our sins, brought us to life together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and seated us together in heaven in Christ Jesus, that he might show in the ages to come the overflowing riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus." [19] Also, in the same Epistle: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace." [20] And again: "Bear in mind that you were at that time without Christ . . . and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you, who were once far off, have been brought near through the blood of Christ. . . . through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father." [21] As Christians we are no longer children of wrath, nor even "strangers and foreigners, but . . . citizens with the saints and members of God's household." [22] Truly, Christ Jesus has become our "wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption." [23]

The Apostle St. Peter was not less vigorous, even if his manner was somewhat less refined, in repeating to the first Christians this same teaching of salvation through the mercy of God. His words, moreover, bore the infallible authority of the head of the Church. Thus he writes: "You know that you were redeemed . . . not with perishable things, with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." [24]

St. John, in turn, took up the same theme, presenting it with such tender sympathy as to move the heart. "My dear children," he writes, "these things I write to you in order that you may not

sin. But if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just; and he is a propitiation for our sins, not for ours only but also for those of the whole world." [25] Again, in the same Epistle, he says: "You know that he appeared to take our sins away." [26]

6. THE SACRAMENT OF OUR RECONCILIATION

Christ the Redeemer "has effected man's purgation from sin and taken his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high," [27] holding the highest place in heaven. By His "one offering" [28] He has wiped out all the sins of the world. But as priest forever "he is able at all times to save those who come to God through him." [29] In particular, He continues from His place next to the Father to fulfill one of the most important functions of His priestly power, namely, the remission of sins. From on high He is still carrying out the same mission of salvation which He had come into the world to begin; for Calvary was only one stage in the work of redemption. This work was to go on through the centuries to come. The sacramental economy, through which the infinite merits of His redemption are applied to us, makes it possible for our Saviour Himself to act on each of His redeemed in a manner that overcomes the limitations of history and the conditions of space and time.

As we know, in the sacraments of the Church Jesus Himself comes to make us holy through grace. Indeed, Christ is always active in the souls of men. If our faith were sufficiently deep and enlightened, we should see the Saviour not only as exercising His office of adoration and suppliant prayer before His Father in heaven but also as exercising His priestly activity among us for the sake of our salvation; we should see Him as inspiring, through His Spirit, all decisions and decrees of His Church, and as vivifying with His grace of headship all who are "His"; we should see Him coming, through the medium of the external sacramental rites, to act personally with His hidden but real

power on the innermost being of souls, in order to bring them to justification, to redemption, and to salvation.

The minister of the sacrament of penance is only the instrument of Christ. As in the mystery of the Mass, in the sacrament of penance our faith must take us beyond the visible priest to see that it is the invisible hand of Christ that absolves us. The scribes were correct in reasoning: "Who can forgive sins, but God only?" [30] The Church is the proxy of Christ, not more and not less. She has received from Him the unrestricted power of binding and loosing the consciences of men. "Amen I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven." [31] To the Church have been entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven. The occasion was the evening of Easter day. Redemption had been wrought. Christ, appearing to His Apostles in His risen glory, committed to them this formidable power which belongs solely to God: "Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." [32]

Clearly, this was something beyond the capacity of men. The cleansing of consciences, the opening and closing of heaven, this could only be accomplished by God's almighty power. That is why, on an earlier occasion, Jesus Himself had demonstrated to the crowd that He had the power to forgive sins by showing them that God's almighty power of miracles was in His hands, to use at His good pleasure: " 'But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins'—he said to the paralytic—'I say to thee, arise, take up thy pallet, and go to thy house.' And immediately he arose and, taking up his pallet, went forth in the sight of all." [33]

In the sacrament of penance Christ perpetuates, through the Church, His work of reconciling sinners with God by remitting their sins. For the Christian who commits a grave fault after his baptism, there is no other way of salvation than the mercy of God, of which the sacrament of penance is the privileged in-

strument. If his repentance is sincere, this sacrament brings him the fullness of Christ's forgiveness. According to God's strict justice his sin deserved eternal punishment. But at the root of all God's works is His infinite mercy. God's merciful love is the explanation for all His saving intervention in the world. It was the determining motive for the incarnation and the divine motherhood; it was the reason for His founding the Church; and it determines who are His elect. The universal influence of this fundamental divine attribute is found in all of God's action in the world; He does nothing that is not instilled with it. In fact, the rigor of God's justice is tempered by His mercy even in hell. All the wondrous works of the incarnation and the redemption had their origin in God's love. It is this that moves Him, so to speak, to have pity on man in his afflictions and to save him from his sinfulness.

We do not have a true perception of the supernatural world unless we see it as the source of an immense and continuous outpouring of graces, coming to us from the inmost depths of the Trinity. The human nature of Christ was only the visible instrument of these graces, an instrument that continues its activity among us through the sacraments of the Church. Christ still walks daily among sinners. The Father is at every moment sending His Son to souls in order to redeem and save them. He imparts to them His Spirit, so that being converted from evil they may be brought by penance and expiation to a life of purity and holiness. The greater our sinfulness, the more it attracts the mercy of God.

We must have recourse to the light of faith to see the sacrament of penance as an abiding presence of God's forgiveness, always at the sinner's disposal. If at the moment of sacramental absolution we were to abandon ourselves utterly to the redeeming action of Christ the Saviour's almighty power, one confession alone would be enough to raise us without fail to the furthermost heights of holiness, like the sinner of Magdala at the feet of Christ, or the good thief on the cross. In the blood of Christ there

will always be more than enough redemptive power, even in the dreadful hour of Antichrist, to save all who fervently seek refuge in Him. Through sacramental absolution all the benefits of Christ's redemption descend upon sinners. The efficacy of Christ's blood is infinitely greater than the malice of men and angels together. No matter how great the crimes burdening a man's conscience, the absolution pronounced by the priest can bring full remission of his sins. Each one is granted pardon in the measure of his fervor and his readiness to be purified by the blood of redemption. Thus, the sacrament of penance continues the work of reconciling men with God through the blood of Christ.

The sacrament of penance requires something on the part of the penitent and something on the part of the priest. Essentially, it requires:

1) *on the part of the penitent:* the full confession of all his sins, sorrow for them all, and the firm purpose to amend his life and to perform the penance imposed by the confessor;

2) *on the part of the priest:* an act that is decisive, namely, either absolution or the withholding of forgiveness, if the penitent lacks the necessary disposition. This sacrament, then, is administered by way of a judgment; sentence is passed in the name of Christ, the sole judge of consciences. That is why we speak of it as the *tribunal* of penance.

7. THE CONVERSION OF THE SOUL

For those baptized individuals—their number, alas, is all too great!—who have been unfaithful to the grace of their rebirth in Christ, there would be no further hope of salvation if God, who is rich in mercy and knows our weakness, had not instituted a further remedy, designed to heal the mortal wounds of the soul caused by sin. It is for this reason that the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, following the example of St. Jerome, liked to call the sacrament of penance a "second plank of salvation."

The conception of the sacrament of penance that most Chris-

tians have is altogether too superficial. It consists, for them, in nothing more than a rather painful confession of the faults they have committed. The Church, on the other hand, has a much more profound understanding of Christian penance; she links it with the sublime and comprehensive doctrine of justification, of which this sacrament is only a partial implementation. From this point of view penance is the means whereby the soul is bathed in all of Christ's blood, emerging cleansed and purified. To confess, then, is to be converted.

Nevertheless, there is a great difference in confessions; all penitents are not cleansed to the same degree. At one end there is the confession of the so-called "paschal" or "Easter" Catholic. He comes once a year, often at the last moment, full of haste and impatience. No sooner has he done than he succumbs to his usual sinful ways. What a difference between this minimal and almost perfunctory compliance with the divine law of confession and the efforts of a saintly nun in a convent, or of any devout soul who comes week after week, fervently seeking strength and sustenance from the blood of Christ, so as to be or become utterly pure and sinless and ever more faithful to all the requirements of God's love. St. Catherine of Siena used to say, when preparing to go to confession, "I am going to the blood." In this sacrament the acts of the penitent himself constitute the sacramental matter, and therefore play a causal role in producing grace. Hence, in receiving it, it is more important than ever that we be concerned about our personal dispositions, for upon them largely depends the measure of the effects it will produce.

On the whole, penitents may be put in two classes. There are those who have mere attrition, which is imperfect contrition, and those who have perfect contrition. Some sinners, in other words, approach the tribunal of penance with a sincere desire to be forgiven; but their sorrow consists mainly in regretting the loss of heaven and other supernatural goods. Mingled with their sentiments of comparative repentance may also be a large admixture of human considerations. Their resolution to sin no more is sin-

cere, but it is motivated more by servile fear than by love. Still, God, whose mercy is infinitely greater than our malice, deigns to accept these dispositions; for they are good, even if lacking in constancy and uninspired by great supernatural zeal.

With such sinners, we might remember, it is not a question of hypocrisy, but of weakness and ignorance. God in His all-powerful goodness helps these poor creatures of sin with His prevenient grace. Usually, as we have indicated, their imperfect contrition arises in large part from the shame and disgrace that sin brings them, or from the fear of its punishment. In themselves these sentiments would not be enough to restore the sinner to friendship with the three divine Persons. But if to the desire for forgiveness and to the will to sin no more is joined sacramental absolution, then the blood of Christ imparts to them the forgiveness of God and restores them to the state of grace. Countless, indeed, are those sinful souls who have thus regained the life of Christ through God's mercy.

The foregoing remarks dealt with minimum requirements, but the minimum is not the ideal. It is much better, and earnestly to be urged, that one direct his spiritual vision toward the summits. Yet even among souls striving for the higher ideal there is great unevenness in the effects produced, though the sacrament they receive with fervent devotion is one and the same.

In the ordinary cases of perfect contrition the sequence of events is something like this. A Christian has fallen into sin. Then, as the spirit of faith begins to stir anew within him, he comes to detest his sin. At first it may be out of servile fear. But trusting in the divine mercy, he humbly beseeches God to pardon his misdeeds. Whereupon, the grace of God is received into his soul, together with charity and all the virtues. When he has received this initial grace, his fear becomes a filial fear, and love begins to prevail in his heart. Now he regrets his past sins, not for their consequences to him, but because they are an infinite offense against the majesty of a God who is so good. With the prodigal son he says in his heart: "Father, I have sinned against

heaven and before thee. I am no longer worthy to be called thy son." [34] And with that, his conversion from sin to perfect repentance is achieved. God, the most tender and loving of fathers, takes him in His arms, and holding him to His heart, lets him understand that all has been forgiven.

But over and above this ordinary course of events are instances of most exceptional and extraordinary conversion. The conversion of the sinful woman of the gospel and that of St. Paul are outstanding examples. But such conversions have happened in all centuries of the Church's history. They are striking manifestations of the inexhaustible riches of God's mercy and Christ's grace of headship. They also reveal the profound and invariable laws relating to conversion, for they show that God does not save us without, or despite, ourselves.

In these quasi-miraculous transformations, as in every conversion, the three Persons of the Trinity take the initiative toward salvation. Such an alteration in one's life depends in the first instance, not on one's efforts or desires, but on God, who bestows His mercy "unto the praise of the glory of his grace." [35] In the Lamentations of Jeremias, for example, we read: "Convert us, O Lord, to thee, and we shall be converted." [36] Such a favor cannot be merited. It may be obtained through prayer, but solely out of liberality on God's part. Man's role consists in accepting this utterly gratuitous grace, in consenting to the action of God working in him. A divine intervention of this kind changes one's life down to its very roots. The outward manifestations of this grace differ with each individual, going hand in hand with the thousand and one differences in character traits and psychological make-up that are found in human beings. Thus, each such conversion is a special case.

The Church gives us the essential outlines of this spiritual phenomenon, following the masterful exposition of the doctrine of justification given by St. Thomas. In the first place, there is an act of faith which puts the soul in contact with God and face to face, as it were, with Christ. Next follows a movement in the soul

of servile fear, arising from the realization of the punishments that have been decreed for sin. This is followed by the emergence of confidence in the divine mercy, together with a deep consciousness of one's own nothingness. Then comes the first act of charity, of perfect love, which is accompanied by hatred of sin, not because of fear, but "on account of God Himself." [37]

This love of predilection places God before all creatures. When the soul has such love, the presence of moral evil produces in it a sentiment similar to the sorrowfulness of soul that Christ experienced in Gethsemane, when He saw before Him all the sins of the world. Sorrowfulness of this kind is motivated exclusively by considerations of God and constitutes one of the highest acts of charity. It was the most sorrowful sentiment that Christ endured on the Cross, and it is this same sentiment that produces real anguish and torment in those most holy and pure souls who in this life reach the highest summits of the spiritual marriage and the transforming union. In the Seventh Mansion of *The Interior Castle* St. Teresa, for example, declares this to be the case. Such souls see mortal sin as it is in reality, namely, as the greatest evil in the universe and, if one may say so without impropriety, as something that would cause God Himself to be sick if He were subject to any kind of alteration. The key to the psychology of all conversion is to be found in this sorrowfulness of soul that is wholly based on God and is the result of charity in the soul. Charity begets filial fear, which in turn elicits the act of repentance. Expiation then follows as something that love now finds itself impelled to do.[38]

The foregoing analysis of conversion represents only the broad outlines. For a more complete picture the special circumstances of each case must also be taken into account. These circumstances vary almost ad infinitum, differing with each individual. In the concrete, all the virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit work jointly, as the circumstances require, to bring about this complex spiritual experience which results in the return of a soul to God.

Faith, for instance, makes clear the goal to be attained and the

way that leads to it. By means of insight that is inspired by God, it permits the intellect to know the supernatural world that awaits us—that world which, through the mystery of our redemption in the blood of Christ, is now a proper object of our *hope*. Faith gives the repentant sinner the certainty that in the boundless merits of the Passion of the Word Incarnate lies a power of expiation and purification that is infinitely greater than all the malice contained in the sins of both men and angels. In seeing the inexhaustible depths of Christ's mercy and of His grace of headship, a soul cannot but find therein the cause for unbounded trust and confidence. Even should it have committed every imaginable crime, it still knows that God will pardon it at the first sign of repentance. It knows that all virtues are at its service, nourishing its repentant *love*. Under the inspiration of the Christian virtue of *prudence*, such a newly converted soul begins to reorganize its whole life, patterning it after the teaching of the Cross. The practice of the virtue of *justice* in regard to God will have a new direction for this soul, taking the form of reparation. The virtue of *fortitude* will keep it steadfast in the path of expiation. And the virtue of *temperance* will guard it against all weakness concerning the sense appetite, giving it the strength to be persevering in purity and faithful to Christ.

In certain cases of privileged conversion the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit plays the principal role. Such instances illustrate the adaptability and flexibility, as it were, of the action of God; they show that in governing the world through His providence God can draw souls to Himself without doing violence to their will. With some, the inspirations of the gift of wisdom are most prominent, allowing them to appreciate to an extraordinary degree the infinite goodness and kindness of God and the utter vanity of all creatures. Such souls are destined to a life of the highest mysticism, a life of most intimate union with the Trinity. In the case of others, the gift of understanding predominates, so that by means of exceptional insights, which often come unexpectedly and in rapid succession, they are given an

anticipation of Christ's own light of understanding. Thus illumined they are able to penetrate the deepest meanings of the symbolism contained in the rites of the Church, or the hidden meanings of Sacred Scripture, with the result that all doubts against the faith disappear.

Still others enjoy to a special degree the gift of knowledge, which gives them a most intense realization of the basic nothingness of all life that passes and of all joy that vanishes. To some converted souls, moreover, the gift of counsel brings an instant awareness of the new direction their life must take, so that they realize immediately that everything must now change, exteriorly as well as interiorly. Again, other souls who may have been weak and yielding in the face of the least occasion of sin, now experience a divinely inspired strength that protects them henceforth from all evil. The Spirit of God, who now dwells in them, ensures their perseverance in good.

The ways of God are infinitely varied. One of the great joys of heaven will consist in seeing the diverse ways in which, through all the circumstances of human life and human history, the hand of God was infallibly at work, guiding the path of those who are His and leading them to Himself. Then it shall be clear to us that God Himself, through Christ, was at the forefront in the search of His lost sheep, calling each by name and bringing them back to the fold.[39] Each soul has its own road to conversion; and in heaven, when the mystery of our redemption will be made manifest in the full light of God, the elect will know the way by which each was led to the fold.

The theological principles of conversion which we have been considering could be illustrated by numerous examples. Many indeed are the saints who had been sinners like us; but through the merciful and all-powerful grace of Christ they were brought from the depths of sin to the highest summits of Christian perfection—often speedily and in short time. The most illustrious example is that of the sinful woman of the gospel, who was converted by Christ Himself. This woman, "who was a sinner," was known to all the town for her disorderly life and conduct. But

from the first moment that Christ came into her life, all was changed. Having learned that Jesus was dining at the house of Simon the Pharisee, she went there in haste, her soul full of confidence that must have seemed bold. Undaunted by what people might say and overcoming what is most dear to a woman, namely, her pride and self-respect, she threw herself at the feet of Jesus, with but one desire in her heart—forgiveness. Her attitude of humility, her sorrow, her tears, all spoke but one purpose —she wanted Jesus to forgive her. Her sobs had burst forth so suddenly and uncontrollably that, for a moment, she herself seemed embarrassed. Then, recollecting herself and seeing that she had bathed the feet of Jesus with her tears, she began to wipe them with her hair, kissing them as she did so.

In the soul of the sinner of Magdala one sentiment overshadowed all the rest: to love Christ above everything. Therein lay the secret of this conversion, which was as final as it was overwhelming, and which was to mark this woman as an everlasting testimony to the glory of Christ's mercy. How great her gratitude must have been as she heard Jesus say to Simon: "Dost thou see this woman. . . . her sins, many as they are, shall be forgiven, because she has loved much." [40] *Love* is the keyword. Love is the highest law; love determines the measure of every conversion. The sinner of Magdala had scarcely met Christ, yet our Lord knew her inmost soul, for He knows the deepest secrets of men's hearts. He who is Truth Itself did not hesitate to proclaim to all the world, in His gospel that was to be preached to all the nations, that this woman who even yesterday was still a slave to sin had come to Him with such deep and burning love in her heart that long years of penance would not have brought her to greater heights of holiness than she had attained in these few moments. Verily, verily, she had *already* loved much, for the value of love is not measured by its duration, but by its intensity. This, in fact, is the new gospel of Christ, namely, to love God above all things and to reduce the whole observance of the law to this one commandment.

In the centuries that followed, the story of the Magdalene was

not to be unparalleled. Many individuals after her have found in this episode of the gospel the secret of their own conversion after a life of sin. Moved by the mercy that Christ showed to the sinner of Magdala, they in their turn left all to follow Christ, wanting henceforth no other love but His.

This love for Christ is the measure and the rule of everything in heaven; but already in this life the intensity of one's love of Christ determines the amount of grace received in forgiveness, and the degree of transformation in Him that is wrought in the soul of the penitent through the sacrament of penance. Each soul derives from the blood of Christ the measure of grace corresponding to its dispositions at the time of receiving the sacrament. Needless to say, this is a point of capital importance for one's spiritual life, since the practice of frequent confession can be one of the most efficacious means of advancing to the state of perfect conversion to God.

Generally speaking, after going to confession the soul that is seeking perfection will find itself in one of three possible states. In the first place, it may have approached the tribunal of penance in a state that was less perfect than it had before its fall. The result is that, even though it is restored to the life of grace, it now possesses a lower degree of holiness. It regains the merits of the good works previously performed; they will await the soul in heaven. But, if it does not regain its former state, in heaven it will lack that higher degree of essential blessedness wherein for all eternity it would have contemplated the presence of God in a more perfect measure. On the other hand, if the soul returns to God with a generosity and fervor equal to the state of perfection it had before its fall, it will regain the same degree of grace and perfection it had before.

But there is yet a third possibility. It is the case of the soul whose fervor and love are greater than before it fell. Such a soul, purified and sanctified by the blood of Christ, will find a grace of transformation that configures it to the holiness of Christ to a higher degree than it formerly possessed. This soul will be in-

comparably more holy than it was before. Cases like this are not just fancy; they have occurred many times. St. Peter is an outstanding example. How great must have been his sorrow when his eyes met those of Christ on the night of the Passion! How final and absolute, too, was his commitment to Jesus from that moment on! There are many sinful souls who enter the confessional with such deep sentiments of repentance that the forgiveness of Christ which they receive at the hands of the priest immediately raises them to a very high degree of holiness. This is simply to say that God gives Himself in the measure that we want to receive Him. The least drop of Christ's blood of redemption operating sacramentally on the soul has the power to erase all the sins of a human life and to transform a most wretched sinner into a very great saint.

As already indicated, the aforesaid teaching on the sacrament of penance is of the utmost importance from a practical standpoint. It points out why we should make every effort to receive this sacrament with the greatest possible sorrow in the soul. St. Thomas has summarized this teaching in a text that is of primary importance: "Sometimes," he says, "the fervor of the penitent is proportional to a greater grace than that from which he fell through sin, sometimes to an equal grace, and sometimes to a lesser. And so it happens that sometimes the penitent is restored to a higher state of grace than he previously had, sometimes to an equal state, and sometimes to a lesser. And the same reasoning applies to the virtues with which grace is attended." [41]

8. THE FULLER MEANING OF EXPIATION

The need and the nature of expiation can only be grasped in the light of theological teaching on mortal sin. Catholic tradition defines it, briefly but trenchantly, as a turning away from God and seeking, instead, attachment to creatures: *aversio a Deo et conversio ad creaturas.* These are fearful, awesome words. The sinner makes himself the center and the rule of his life. He sub-

ordinates the whole universe to himself; and that is an open affront to the infinite majesty of God, who is the beginning and the end of all things. Not that he always opposes himself to God as the immediate object of his sin. This is what happens when one hates God directly, in Himself, and it is the greatest of all sins. Rather, the sinner attaches himself in a sinful and decisive manner to a created being; that is to say, he attaches himself to a being that is destined to pass away and which, at best, he should only use. Practically speaking, the sinner prefers the creature to the Creator, denying his condition and his duties as a child of God. In the very nature of things such injustice and ingratitude must be repaired through sorrow for one's sin and through expiation.

The virtue of penance, therefore, involves more than just turning from sin; it also includes a deep sorrow for the offense committed against God. This sentiment of compunction for sin on account of God is paramount. It is the source of all other sentiments of the penitent, being like a principal act from which the secondary acts flow. The Council of Trent emphasizes the primacy of contrition over all other sentiments and all other acts of the penitent: "Contrition, which holds the first place among the acts of the pentitent, consists in sorrow and detestation in the soul for the sin committed, together with the firm purpose to sin no more." [42] Thus, the conversion of the soul, the confession of one's sins, and the exterior works of satisfaction, these all spring from the contrition in the heart. Hence the importance of Christain repentance, for by means of it the soul is made secure in its triumph over evil and all the effects of sin are nullified, whether it be the wrong committed against God or the great damage done to one's spiritual life or the loss suffered by the supernatural treasury of Christ's mystical body.

Sorrow based on regret for having sinned forms the essence of perfect contrition. This sorrow is in the will; it is not necessarily, and certainly not primarily, in the feelings. It arises when the soul, in the light of faith, realizes the infinite malice of every

mortal sin. It recognizes then that on account of His infinite grandeur and His numberless and limitless perfections every intelligent creature owes God love and adoration. Sin is a refusal in practice to acknowledge this infinite transcendence of God. The self-seeking man prefers himself to God; that is the essence of all sin. When after his fall the sinner comes to acknowledge his guilt, instinctively he seeks to restore to God the infinite praise that is due Him. Yet, in himself he finds only sin and nothingness. Accordingly, turning to his Christ, he implores Him, standing before the Father, to be his expiation, his reparation, his justice, and his redemption.

The sinful Christian who seeks refuge in the soul of Christ will find in the heart of Jesus the great love that He has for His Father, and in this love lies His power to make reparation that surpasses immeasurably the offense committed by all the crimes and misdeeds of the sinner. Christ's blood flowing sacramentally through the soul of the sinner has the power to placate the justice of God. The Mass, moreover, brings the graces of the sacrament of penance to full fruition; for in the Mass the sinner offers to the Trinity no less than the boundless love of the heart of Jesus, firm in the confidence that this sacrifice of propitiation restores to God His infinite glory. Thus we see that in the sacrament of penance, as in the other sacraments, everything comes about in and through Christ. Through the absolution of the priest the soul of the sinner is brought into actual and immediate contact with the redeeming power of Christ. By this power the soul is made one with the innermost sentiments of love and expiation that animated the soul of the Word Incarnate on earth when, day and night, He saw before His eyes all the sins of the world.

The grace proper to the sacrament of penance is a grace of conformation to Christ, who expiated all the sins of the world and made amends for the violation of the divine glory caused by our sins. The sacramental grace of penance, moreover, permits us to share in the mystery of the infinite satisfactions offered by the Sacred Heart of Jesus, bruised for our sins. The modern

world has lost not only the sense of sin but also the sense of expiation. More than anything else it needs to learn again that reparation is necessary to correct the disorder caused in the world even by the smallest sin. Every violation of an order calls for a just restoration of the scale of values. The man who sins commits an offense against God, against his conscience, and against all society. His sin therefore imposes a threefold chastisement. It imposes eternal punishment in hell or temporal punishment in purgatory. It imposes remorse on the soul. It imposes punishment from society if the crime was public. And even failing that, it will impose open shame and confusion on all impenitent sinners in the life to come; at the Last Judgment they shall stand exposed before the whole world.

The sinner, as we have said, is guilty of undue attachment to a creature. It is only right, then, that his reconciliation with the moral order be by way of penance that affects the faculties and powers by which he sinned. Justice demands such a sanction, and every sinful soul feels this instinctively, as it were. This psychological principle was illustrated, for example, by a young man of Toulouse condemned to death. His last words as he was being led to the gallows were: "I have sinned, I am expiating!" Memorable words these, worthy of a truly repentant soul.

Christ atoned for us by His blood. It is the purpose of the sacrament of penance to apply to us the inexhaustible merits of His satisfaction. In pardoning the sinner, therefore, God remits not only his eternal punishment but also his temporal punishment in proportion to the degree of his union with Christ, a union that corresponds to the fervor of his love. The Council of Trent took note of this marvelous communication of grace which each member of Christ's mystical body receives from the infinite fullness of His grace of headship, and which permits the members of the body to share without limit in the mystery of atonement of the Word Incarnate. Because of its continuity, so to speak, with Christ's expiation, the smallest act of sacramental penance assumes a satisfactory value that is infinite. "Our whole glory is in

Christ," says the Council, "in whom we live, in whom we are moved, and in whom we make satisfaction, bearing worthy fruits of penance, fruits which have their power from Him, are offered by Him to the Father, and are accepted through Him by the Father." [43]

Through the absolution of the priest we avail ourselves of all the benefits of Christ's Passion. That is why absolution takes away our sins and, as we have said, remits the punishment due to sin in proportion to the love and fervor of each penitent. After a perfect confession, then, there is no more question either of sin or chastisment between God and man. God the Father is ready to receive the prodigal son and to give him a place at His eternal banquet. And if man chooses never to bring up his sin again, God will not be the one to mention it first. All is forgiven.

9. SEEKING THE SUMMITS

Christian piety rightly takes pleasure in reflecting on the supernatural benefits of baptism and confirmation and the Eucharist, but one cannot help getting the impression that on the whole it does not give the practice of frequent confession as much consideration as it deserves. We do, for example, praise the grandeur of baptism, which makes us children of God, members of Christ, and coheirs-to-be of His glory. We exhort the militant workers of Catholic Action to realize their responsibilities in face of an apostate world, to contend valiantly as soldiers of Christ for its rechristianization, and to rely for their apostolate of conquest on the graces of their confirmation. Moreover, all the faithful are aware that the Eucharist is the great sacrament of the life of Christ in us, the source and center of the unity of the Catholic world.

As for the sacramental grace of penance, however, we have not, it seems, been equally successful in turning this supernatural reality to best account. Yet, next to the Eucharist, penance is the sacrament that plays the most active role in the progress of the

spiritual life. The saints themselves professed a great devotion to confession, and the Church insists with unmistakable emphasis that the sacrament of penance is of universal importance for maintaining a high degree of morality in Christian society. Her mind is clearly stated in this passage from the *Catechism of the Council of Trent:* "Whatever of piety, of holiness, of religion, has been preserved to our times in the Church, through God's goodness, must be ascribed in great measure to confession." [44]

In addition to conferring the essential grace of forgiveness from Christ, the sacrament of penance also exercises an important influence in forming consciences. For the priest is not only a judge of souls but also a father, a physician, a teacher, and a director of them. In all these ways he forms Christ in souls. He awakens them to their responsibilities and teaches them to be attentive to the inspirations of God. Through the habit of examining themselves and of exercising watchfulness and self-control —habits fostered by frequent confession—the souls of penitents gradually achieve perfect transformation in Christ. No one can fail to notice that the practice of frequent confession develops among Catholics a sense of discrimination and correctness in moral matters that is not to be found anywhere else. Thus in fulfilling her mission to be judge and arbiter of consciences, and her obligation to form them according to the law of God, the Church has contributed mightily to the preservation and improvement of both private and public morality and to the sanctification of the whole mystical body of Christ.

Many Christian souls—so many that no mortal knows their number—have found in confession and its auxiliary effects, not only forgiveness but also the grace to overcome their numerous habits of sin and imperfection. Without absolution and direction from the priest they would have idled away their whole life in a state of mediocrity. But once purified by the blood of Christ and guided by the counsels of the priest, they followed their Master along the narrow path of the gospel that leads to the summits. The whole meaning and purpose of the sacrament of penance

is to apply the fruits of redemption to our Christian life. Therein lies its importance in the economy of salvation.

We see, then, that in the sacrament of penance God, who knows the weaknesses of man, has prepared a wonderful remedy for our human failings, one that is adapted to our nature and to our condition as sinners. By this sacrament the blood of Christ overflows men's souls in a sacramental way, producing in them a thorough renovation and imparting anew the grace of configuration to Christ. There are ever so many saints now in heaven who, after having lost their baptismal innocence, regained the life of Christ through this sacrament. Faith reveals to us its reality and its effects. Through faith we know that this sacrament of mercy is a continuation of the effects produced by the incarnation and the redemption, that it is the means whereby Christ continues His work of purifying and sanctifying sinners, that it is, in a word, the sacrament through which Christ is permanently at the service and disposal of sinners, still coming to seek and to save what was lost. Is not this precisely the reason, one might say the whole reason, for the Church to make saints out of the sinners we are? It was with this in mind that Christ chose to entrust the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter the apostate; He wanted to impress on him that he would have to forgive, not seven times, but seventy times seven, which is to say times without number.

In Christ, God Himself has become our redemption; henceforth no one need despair of his salvation. God Himself wants it with infinitely more ardor than we are capable of. If, like St. Peter, Cain and Judas had had recourse to Christ's mercy, even they would have become very great saints, on a par with other holy men of the Old and the New Testaments. St. Thérèse of Lisieux, whom St. Pius X called the greatest saint of recent times, had this bold and boundless confidence in the merciful love of the Saviour. In a celebrated passage of *The Story of a Soul* she writes of it with irresistible charm. "It is not," she says, "merely because I have been preserved from mortal sin that I lift up my

heart to God in trust and in love. I am certain that even if I had on my conscience every imaginable crime, I should lose nothing of my confidence, but would throw myself, my heart broken with sorrow, into the arms of my Saviour. I remember His love for the prodigal son, I have heard His words to St. Mary Magdalene, to the woman taken in adultery, and to the woman of Samaria. No—there is no one who could frighten me, for I know too well what to believe concerning His Mercy and His Love." [45]

The source of the traditional and authentic theological teaching regarding the infinite riches of the Word Incarnate's grace of headship is found in the gospel itself. This teaching makes it clear that in the blood of Christ, the fruits of which are imparted to the soul through the sacrament of penance, resides a power to redeem so great that it can instantly raise the most sinful soul to the highest degree of holiness. Sinners who have recourse to the tribunal of penance find in this blood of redemption a source of mercies as boundless as the ocean. Their poor souls, blemished by sin, are transformed anew in Christ and through Him regain all the splendors and all the hopes of their divine calling to sanctification. The grace of forgiveness restores to them an appreciation of the higher ideals, together with an ardent desire to make their life a continual going up to God. Realizing that so far the blood of Christ was wasted on them, these souls who had been indifferent to their calling are filled with shame and remorse for their former cowardliness and lukewarmness. Reawakened by the sacrament of penance to their responsibilities, they are earnestly resolved henceforth to be more fervently devoted to their calling in Christ.

On the other hand, souls who are habitually and steadfastly fervent in their lives advance more rapidly to a high degree of perfection through the sacrament of penance. The blood of Christ purifies them of such venial faults as they may have; and the most faithful and most fervent among them are hastened on the path that will lead them to the heroic heights of sainthood. If this is true of fervent souls in general, on whom the blood of

Christ is sacramentally poured out, how much more true it is of souls that may already be saints. More than any others, these holy souls profit from the graces of purification and the graces that empower a soul to triumph over sin. Souls such as these become masterpieces of the power of redemption, and already on earth God maintains them in steadfast peace.

On earth we shall never adequately comprehend the excellence of the sacrament of Christ's mercy, or the inexhaustible riches of its blessings. Only in the Day of Christ, when the infinite mercy of the Saviour toward poor sinners will be fully revealed, shall we have a clear vision of the countless multitudes of saints who would have failed to gain heaven if Jesus had not instituted this great sacrament of forgiveness.

Notes to Chapter Six

[1] I Pet. 5:8.
[2] Eph. 6:12.
[3] Cf. Eph. 2:3.
[4] I John 5:19.
[5] Cf. Eph. 2:12,13.
[6] Matt. 4:16.
[7] Matt. 12:18–21.
[8] Matt. 11:29.
[9] Luke 4:18–19.
[10] Matt. 11:28–29.
[11] Matt. 9:11–13.
[12] Luke 19:10.
[13] Matt. 1:21–22.
[14] Luke 24:25.
[15] Matt. 16:18.
[16] John 8:11.
[17] John 4:26.
[18] Rom. 5:6–10.
[19] Eph. 2:4–7.
[20] Eph. 1:7.
[21] Eph. 2:12–13, 18–19.

[22] Eph. 2:19.
[23] I Cor. 1:30.
[24] I Pet. 1:18-19.
[25] I John 2:1-2.
[26] I John 3:5.
[27] Heb. 1:3-4.
[28] Heb. 10:14.
[29] Heb. 7:25.
[30] Mark 2:7.
[31] Matt. 18:18.
[32] John 20:22-23.
[33] Mark 2:10-11.
[34] Luke 15:21.
[35] Eph. 1:6.
[36] 5:21.
[37] See the Council of Trent, Sess.vi,cap.vi, and *S.T.*,III,85,5.
[38] According to St. Thomas (*S.T.*,III,85,5), six elements are comprised in perfect contrition. Of these, only the first four can precede the state of justification, namely: the primordial action on the part of God, faith, servile fear, and hope. The last two, viz., charity and filial fear, follow, not by a posteriority of time but of nature, the infusion of sanctifying grace which is the *term* of conversion in the strict sense. As for the activity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, strictly speaking these gifts and their operation follow the moment of justification, although the activity of the Holy Spirit may otherwise prompt and attend the initial stages of conversion. It should be noted that our discussion in the text proceeds from the standpoint of the concrete psychology of conversion rather than from the strictly ontological character of the process.
[39] Cf. John 10:4.
[40] Cf. Luke 7:36-50.
[41] *S.T.*,III,89,2.
[42] Sess.xiv (*De Poenit.*), cap.4.
[43] Sess.xiv,cap.8.
[44] Part II, The Sacraments: Penance; quoted from McHugh and Callan, *op. cit.*, p. 281.
[45] *A Little White Flower: the Story of St. Thérèse of Lisieux,* trans. by the Rev. Thomas N. Taylor (Chicago: Carmelite Press, 1925) p. 243.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Holy Matrimony: Family Life in Christ

SUMMARY: I. Christian Love
1. The Human Ideal. . . . 2. The Christian Ideal. . . .
3. Conjugal Love in Christ.

II. The Education of Children
1. The Birth of the Children of God. . . . 2. The Education of the Children of God. . . . 3. The Control of the Senses. . . . 4. The Training of the Mind. . . .
5. The Training of the Will. . . . 6. Social Responsibility.

III. Christ in the Home
1. The Family: The School of Holiness. . . . 2. Conjugal Spirituality. . . . 3. Family Spirituality. . . . 4. The Family and Modern Society. . . . 5. The Holy Family.

Holy Matrimony is the sacrament of family life in Christ in all its aspects.

IN FOUNDING His Church and instituting the sacraments, Christ took into consideration the eminently social character of man's nature. Two sacraments in particular stand out as surpassing in purpose and function the merely personal horizons of the individual. They are holy matrimony and holy orders. In the Church of Christ these sacraments perform a social role that is extraordinarily large and far-reaching in scope.

In other words, one becomes a father or mother not for one's personal well-being alone but also for one's country and in the interests of the City of God. Seen in the light of faith, from the exalted perspectives of the economy of redemption, marriage in the Church assumes the profound meaning and august grandeur of a priesthood. St. Paul intimated as much when he wrote:

"This is a great mystery—I mean in reference to Christ and to the Church." [1] Thus, from God's point of view the union of man and wife possesses a sacred character. Conjual love, which is called upon to blossom forth into fatherhood and motherhood, is divinely ordained, first and foremost, to promote the increase of the mystical body of Christ, to fill heaven with the number of the elect, and to increase and multiply the eternal adorers of the Trinity.[2] In a word, the Christian home is to be the nursery of saints, serving the growth of the City of God.[3]

I. CHRISTIAN LOVE

It is hardly necessary to point out the extent to which the modern world, with its crass materialism and unrestrained individualism, has debased the true conception of family life. In his encyclical on marriage [4] Pope Pius XI set forth the false teachings and evil practices of our corrupt society in relation to this most important aspect of Christian life and morality. The fact is that we live in an age that literally teems with counterfeit homes; and the evil has spread even to our most out of the way towns and villages. No one with eyes to see can fail to be alarmed by this spectacle of moral decay in family life, which has reached a point never equaled, in all probability, since the fall of the Roman Empire.

Even so-called Christian nations have not been unaffected. Their legislation and their customs have been influenced by the general decline, so that for the most part they have followed, in law or in fact, the same path of moral decadence. All the more reason, therefore, to set forth boldly and in its entirety the ideal and the splendor of marriage, both from the human and the Christian point of view. Those in the forefront of Catholic Action movements have, happily, rediscovered in its fullness the meaning and purpose of marriage. Rightly do they want the home as well as the rest of life to be centered in Christ.

I. THE HUMAN IDEAL

Even from the standpoint of its human value and ideal, marriage is a most beautiful thing. In marriage two persons are joined in body and soul to live one life, having in common the same ideals of heart and mind, and sharing in the same joys, the same hopes, and the same sorrows. The source of this mysterious longing of man and woman for each other is found in their respective natures. God in His wisdom wanted them to be not only distinct but complementary. Hence their very being is so constituted as to help and complete each other in a marvelous way on every level of life: on the physical, the intellectual, the moral, and the spiritual level. In terms of marriage, therefore, human nature is not simply man or woman, but the two joined together in indissoluble union, to yield mutual enrichment to their common nature.

In marriage two sense natures long for and meet each other, seeking to lose themselves in a union which no human lawgiver has ever been able to describe so directly and at the same time so delicately as Christ in the gospel when He said: "And the two shall become one flesh." [5] Of course, as beings that are persons, endowed with a spiritual principle, an immortal soul created primarily to manifest the beauty and grandeur of God, a man and wife are also called upon to be united on a much higher level. Nevertheless, this union on the physical—one is tempted to say the physiological—level is basic and indispensable.

Indeed, it would be a great mistake to scorn, or to underestimate, the value and importance of this union in the flesh of two beings of flesh. You would only delude yourself with the promise of a false mysticism that looks on man as a disembodied spirit, and you would find the legitimate desires of nature taking their terrible revenge, often in the illegitimate form of adultery. It is not saying too much that all the unnatural and anti-Christian deviations from the true conception of marriage arose from the failure, or the refusal, to respect the wonderful order and har-

mony contained in the human ideal as formulated by the wisdom of Christ Himself. In one way or another, by excess or by defect, all such errors violate that order. For the gospel, not less than reason itself, condemns both the tendency to excess and the tendency to defect, that is, both the unnatural fetterment of human desires and inclinations and the perverse extolment of brute passion. In this matter, as in others, the mean is the rule. So long as the flesh is subordinated to the spirit, and conjugal love to the love and law of God, everything has its place in marriage.

It should be stressed that even in marriage the sense nature of a man and woman must always be under the control and at the service of reason; the primacy of the spirit must be maintained. Marriage is above all a union of souls sharing the same ideals of life.[6] Each is to contribute to this union his understanding, his will, his intellectual and moral qualities, and his special personal gifts and endowments. Furthermore, though this is not the place to analyze the resemblances and the differences between man and wife—for instance, how they differ or agree as to intellect and will and other faculties—it should nevertheless be noted that man and wife are not identical beings, but complementary expressions of one and the same human nature.

This fact is well known to psychologists everywhere, and even though their approach to the theme of complementariness is at times a bit unrealistic, it does afford them an almost endless variety of treatment. For, despite the basic sameness of all the vast millions upon millions of human beings, there exist among them both many obvious and many subtle differences arising from differences of race, of climate, of cultural achievement, or differences of the age and civilization in which they live. The essential difference, however, is that of man and woman. The Creator has endowed the mind and will of each with different aptitudes that are not only ordained to diverse functions in life but also intended by God to keep them united in one common and basic task, namely, the founding of a family in which each of the two has his function to fulfill for their mutual advantage

and for the advantage of their children, created for union with God.

Everything, therefore, is made to serve their common goal and purpose: the sound reasoning and prudent judgment of a man on the one hand, and on the other hand the more direct and intuitive insights of a woman as well as her special capacity for love; also, the ceaseless toil of the father and the indefatigable devotion of the mother. And if man's instinct for gathering with his fellows takes him out of the home, his equally strong instinct for home life brings him back again, there to find the love and affection that soothes the weariness of his daily grind. Whatever the cares and worries of a man, they are soon forgotten when he is greeted by the smile and tender love of a devoted wife, the helpmate given by God to support him in his daily life. In the home, too, he finds his children; and if his brow is knit with care and anguish, it cannot but come unwrinkled as he watches them romp in play, their faces radiating joy and innocence. Thus, through all the ups and downs that must be faced in the daily struggle for a living, the family remains the refuge and sanctuary of happiness. And if God's interests are always put first, in the home will be realized the complete ideal of human life.

2. THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL

Without in any way impairing its human values, the law of Christ conferred a new dignity on marriage, raising it infinitely above mere human excellence. From the account in Genesis of the origin of the human race we learn that in the creation of man and woman God took pains, so to speak, to leave nothing to chance. We ought frequently to reread the account, so wholesome and refreshing in its Biblical setting, of the formation of Adam and Eve. It would help us understand how great was the love and predilection of the Creator for the first human couple.

In that first chapter of Genesis we find God emerging, as it were, from His eternity of silence and recollection and saying:

"Let us make man to our image and likeness." [7] God, we might say, was already thinking of the appearance in human flesh of the Word Incarnate, who came to dwell among us. And God added: "It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help like unto himself." [8] And so He created the first woman, forming her from the rib of man. Having been thus fashioned out of man's own being, the woman would always experience a need of returning to deepest union with man; and this perennial yearning would be an everlasting reminder of her mysterious origin. In creating Eve, moreover, the Son of God was already thinking of His future Mother, the Virgin Mary, even as the creation of Adam foreshadowed His own incarnation in the person of the Redeemer.

The first man, beholding the first woman, received her with tender love and affection. "This now," he exclaimed in his happiness, "is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." [9] Of all creatures that God had made, the woman was the one most intimately associated with him. Furthermore, Holy Writ tells us of the wonderful state of innocence and unmixed happiness that Adam and Eve possessed, of their fullness of knowledge and wisdom, of their moral righteousness and their many preternatural gifts. All these gifts and privileges resulted in this first couple being, before the Fall, the perfect type and anticipated ideal of Christian marriage.

When Christ came, it was not to do away with the law, but to lead all beings of the universe to their highest perfection. He did not abolish the contract of marriage, but raised it to the dignity of a sacrament, that is, to the dignity of being a symbol and source of divine grace. It was St. Paul who revealed to Christian thought the bold symbolism of this sacrament, declaring the intimate union of man and wife a sign of Christ's union with the Church.[10] As in the other sacraments, a threefold symbolism connects the sacrament of matrimony with the mystery of Christ. This symbolism reminds us, in the first place, of the supreme love of Christ crucified, who died for His spouse, the Church. Sec-

ondly, it signifies the profound meaning of conjugal love among Christians, showing that this love is a likeness of Christ's love for His Church and should, like His, be marked by the gift of self to the point of dying for it if need be. Thirdly, it foreshadows the consummated union of Christ with His Church in the splendors of glory. Thus, the sacrament that is, in a way, the least spiritual in regard to the effects it produces on the soul, surpasses them all in regard to the sublimity and boldness of its symbolism. Nothing could more vividly depict the burning love of Christ for His Church than the impassioned love that unites man and wife in "one flesh."

Like the other sacraments of the New Law, the sacrament of marriage is both a sign and a cause of grace. At the very moment when, openly and publicly before the priest, a man and woman make mutual exchange of the gift of their person and life, Christ is present, using them as instruments by which His grace of redemption is conferred, so that it is through themselves that He gives Himself to them. Their words and their symbolical actions are the vehicle through which He acts personally on them, uniting these two baptized persons before His Father in heaven in indissoluble love for the purpose of establishing a new home and family. The priest is present only as official witness, acting in the name of the Church. In this sacrament the real ministers of Christ, who act in His name and person, *in persona Christi,* are the spouses themselves. It is through them that Christ touches the inmost depths of their soul, sanctifying it with His grace, even as it is through the intermediary of the priest at the altar that He realizes His miraculous presence in the Eucharist. At the moment when a man and woman pronounce their sacramental consent, they confer on each other the grace of redemption that can transform their human love into Christian love all during the course of their lives. In a very real sense they give Christ to each other, and His presence in the soul inspires them with the sentiments of love that characterize His own fervent love for His Church. Married Christians will have

the grace of state that will help them to love each other in Christ. The divine life of grace received in baptism will endure; will, in fact, fructify into a new grace, configuring them even more perfectly to the Word Incarnate.

According to the teaching of the Church the sacramental grace of matrimony enables a man and wife to love each other with a love that is everlasting and ever faithful, thereby fulfilling the command of Christ: "What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder." [11] The sacrament of marriage confers a strict right to all the actual graces necessary to lead a Christian conjugal life. It also confers a right to all the material and spiritual helps required for the establishment of a home. This sacramental grace, moreover, is given to married people throughout their life on earth, being at their disposal until death. Thus, if they should have been unfaithful to each other or to their duties, no matter for how long, through penance they can always have access to this inexhaustible source of sacramental grace, to find in it the means of regaining sanctification through renewed love and appreciation of the ideal to which they are called. Marriage, in short, gives husband and wife and parents all the graces of the home of Nazareth, the model for every Christian home. It is the sacrament that touches every phase of family life in Christ.

3. CONJUGAL LOVE IN CHRIST

Christ gave His blessing to the joys of marriage. An indication of this was His willingness to be present at the wedding of Cana; for His presence anywhere is never out of place or out of season, even at the most intimate moments of married life. As for the use to be made of the goods of nature and the goods of the world, the law of God is simple and direct: "Whether you eat or drink, or do anything else, do all for the glory of God." [12] So long as one keeps this rule in mind, everything will be in order.

Christ's teaching on marriage is free from every trace of pseudomysticism, that is, from the tendency to deny the legitimate wants of the flesh. This error is all the more dangerous because

the inevitable reaction to it is, not more abnegation, but more and worse immorality. The bonds of affection between man and wife are fully acknowledged; and the conjugal act itself is not only commendable but even meritorious,[13] and at certain times gravely enjoined as a safeguard against adultery and other forms of illicit indulgence. St. Paul, whose praise of virginity is well known, is yet second to none in insisting on the rights and duties of married people. Thus he admonishes: "Let the husband render to the wife her due, and likewise the wife to the husband." [14] Again: "Do not deprive each other, except perhaps by consent, for a time, that you may give yourselves to prayer; and return together again lest Satan tempt you because you lack self-control." [15] And these unmistakable words: "The wife has not authority over her body, but the husband; the husband likewise has not authority over his body, but the wife." [16]

Even between married people, however, there are certain bounds that may not be transgressed, certain things that are wrong. In giving themselves to each other, man and wife must abide by the virtue of conjugal chastity. Their bodies belong to Christ more than to them. Baptism consecrates the whole being of man, body and soul, as a living temple of the Blessed Trinity. Let them remember who dwells in the temple they surrender to each other. In a famous passage of the Epistle to the Ephesians St. Paul set forth the basic principles of conduct for man and wife. These principles will always remain the ideal code of Christian marriage, and married people would do well to read, often and together, not only this passage but the whole Epistle. "Let wives be subject to their husbands as to the Lord," writes the Apostle. "Just as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be to their husbands in all things." Regarding husbands he writes: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for her, that he might sanctify her." [17] Such is Christian marriage in its most profound sense. Conjugal love becomes love in Christ.

In Christian marriage two human beings are united before God under the care and supervision of the Church, so that by

sharing their lives and fortunes each may help the other in his upward journey to the Trinity. Through the priest is invoked and conferred upon them the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The grace bestowed on their union is intended to keep them firm and steadfast in the service of God. In baptism they received the beginnings of eternal life, and in order that every moment on earth may bring them closer to its full attainment, they have now put in common all they have. Henceforth they are to share all their goods, both of body and soul, all their moral and intellectual aptitudes, their likes and dislikes for various activities in and out of the home, their appreciation of things artistic, their preferences in regard to social activities and spiritual practices. When two Christians are united in marriage everything should be together. They should pray together, receive Holy Communion together, love, rejoice, and suffer together. Christian marriage is life together in Christ.

Christians, therefore, marry to become saints. The precept of Christ, "You therefore are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect," [18] is addressed to all without distinction, to married people as well as to others. Sometimes it comes as a surprise, and a great joy, to Christian men and women to learn, perhaps after many years of married life, that God has called both husband and wife to a very high degree of holiness. If they are faithful to God, the grace of their union will transform the smallest action of their conjugal and family life into an act of the highest love, no matter how ordinary and uneventful in the eyes of the world their career may be from beginning to end.

The modern world, it need hardly be said, abounds with false teachings regarding marriage. All of them tend to water down the Christian ideal. These erroneous teachings are responsible for the many evils and dangers that threaten the home in general and Christian marriage in particular. To counteract these evils the Church, the repository of Christ's teaching, has reminded the present generation of the true doctrine on marriage, setting forth the truth of the gospel that will make us free. Even in marriage,

as we have said, Christians are called to the highest degree of holiness. The love of God must be the supreme rule of their human love. Christian marriage is not a matter of any sort of companionship or attachment, but of true charity, of love in Christ. In marriage all the events of daily life, even the least details of family life and the most intimate moments of conjugal love, everything should be so ordered and conducted as to further the progress of man and wife in their upward journey to God. To become saints: that should be the dominant goal and purpose of all conjugal love in Christ.

The three divine Persons of the Trinity, who at baptism came to dwell in their souls, are always at the side of husband and wife, accompanying them every step of the journey through life, and protecting them through the grace of redemption from every shadow of evil. To be sure, this high ideal is seldom realized in full, but just the same it remains the supreme and absolute rule for everyone. Nothing should be allowed to turn a Christian soul away from its Christ; and everything in Christ is designed to bring us closer to God. The Church is quite clear and insistent on this point: all Christians are called to holiness. In his encyclical on marriage Pope Pius XI wrote: "All men, of every condition and in whatever honorable walk of life they may be, can imitate, and are obliged to imitate, that most perfect example of holiness placed before man by God, namely, Christ our Lord, and by God's grace to arrive at the summit of perfection, as is proved by the example of many saints." [19] This is true, therefore, for married people as well as for others. And it does not matter that in its most basic and strictest sense marriage is, without question, an institution ordained to the procreation and education of children; for one can also consider the union of man and wife in its broader and more complete aspect, namely, as two lives shared in common, as an authentic partnership of two spiritual and Christian persons called to eternal life in God in the unity of the Trinity. From this point of view, according to the *Catechism of the Council of Trent,* the yearning and striving for

holiness and the mutual concern to attain the highest moral and spiritual perfection constitute the prime reason for Christian, that is, sacramental, marriage.[20] In any event, God is to be put first, and everything else to be made to depend on this, their first love.

It is up to the man, the head of the family, to take the lead in setting the example of such Christian love. The wife will naturally and spontaneously follow his example. He must, then, avoid being selfish and brutish in his indulgence, so that he will not appropriate the pleasures and joys of marriage without assuming its obligations. Such conduct would be as unfair to the wife as it is unworthy of a man deserving the name. St. Paul's admonition is ever to be heeded: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for her, that he might sanctify her," and that by His expiation and merits "he might present to himself the Church in all her glory, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she might be holy and without blemish," [21] worthy of the august beauty and holiness of Christ.

"As Christ loved the Church." There you have the ideal of conjugal love, expressed in all its sublimity. Mere human understanding would never have dared to rise to such heights. Yet, from his baptism on, the Christian bears the mark and image of Christ in his inmost being, and it is God's plan that all the events and circumstances of his life should serve to engrave deeper in his soul this divinely implanted resemblance to the Word Incarnate. Hence, the husband should approach his wife with the thoughts and sentiments of Christ. His human love, legitimate in itself, is to be transformed into Christian love. The mutual surrender of bodies dictates the mutual consummation of unity of soul in God. Remember that before all else Christian marriage is a union of souls. The husband must cherish his wife as Christ cherished His Church, exercising vigilant watch over her soul. He should wish her to be more and more Christian, more and more holy and Godlike in imitation of the Church. He should, in a word, aspire to bring her, and himself, to the summits of God.

On her part, the wife should emulate her husband in love and affection. It should be her earnest desire to see him grow steadily in likeness to the holiness and perfection of Christ. She will esteem him as the Church loves and esteems Christ, knowing that the union with her husband should further the same supernatural end and ideal as the Church's union with Christ. In the words of St. Paul, "Let wives be subject to their husbands as to the Lord. . . . Just as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be to their husbands in all things." [22]

The Christian wife, then, is not a slave, but a faithful and devoted companion, even as the Virgin Mary was the constant companion and associate of Christ. Such love between man and wife as is envisaged by Christ can achieve a loftiness and delicacy of feeling that touches on the divine. Great, indeed, is the power and influence of a feminine soul over the heart of a man to bring him to Christ and God. Therein lies the key to so many hidden and unheralded conversions of life, whose only witness is the love between man and wife in the home. Thus it happens that after the first years of marriage, when love expresses itself more in eager desire for pleasure, there comes the time of that deeper union and more spiritual intimacy that only ripened age can achieve, a time that often culminates in the serene and hallowed joys of old age, when two beings who have gone through life together now find themselves once more alone, but still together. It is the time when the wife's efforts to interest her husband in something higher than the fleeting pleasures of this life begin to bear full fruit. Together now they seek only to live eternally in Christ as they await the summons to appear before the throne of God in heaven.

To arrive at this stage of highest love in marriage, husband and wife have to keep in mind that the basic law of Christian love, and indeed of all genuine love, consists in the gift of self. To love is to give, and forget, oneself. St. Paul admonishes man and wife that the model not only of conjugal love but of the Christian life as a whole is Christ crucified. If so many homes are disrupted and broken, is it not because the love of man and wife

lack the spirit of sacrifice? The enchantment that marks the first embraces passes quickly away. The routine of daily life, which was for a while transfigured and idealized by love, soon again becomes tedious and wearisome. Little weaknesses of character begin to tell; small defects are exaggerated. It is then that marriage is in danger of becoming, literally, a yoke to both, a *conjugium*. If Christ is not present to exhort them to patience, to kindliness, to gentle love and charity, to mutual help and forbearance, the first embrace of body and soul is no sooner ended than the feeling of isolation sets in to gnaw at the heart of both.

The Eucharist, of course, should play an important part in the life of man and wife, for they have great need of Christ in the Eucharist and should frequently go to the communion rail to bring Him into their home. Only in this way can they preserve their union. Only in this way will they be steadfast in praying together, in forgiving each other for the sake of Christ and, if need be, in expiating their faults together. With the help of Christ in the Eucharist they can remove the seeds of discord and division by which the intimate union of the home is first threatened and then destroyed. For, no matter how much in love they feel themselves, man and wife must soon face the hard realities of life. It is then that the dream of happiness which they cherished may seem to have vanished. Each finds the other weak and selfish. Neglect and even betrayal of each other have, they discover, become distinct possibilities, if not actualities. And when this happens man and wife are at the crossroads; they face the temptations of permitting themselves to be carried away, yielding to whatever course their instincts and inclinations impel, away from home and family, away, too, from true and rewarding love.

On the other hand, if the love of man and wife is based on and seeks its sustenance in Christ, then it will partake of the qualities that characterize the love of the Saviour for His Church. It, too, will be marked by unity, by indissolubility, and by faithfulness unto death. Only by making Christ their rule and guide will they find the strength, the ever-increasing strength, that is

necessary to maintain perfect and absolute faithfulness in their love. Such complete fidelity is required of both. There must never be even so much as a glance, in the gospel sense, at another woman, and never even a thought for another man. Christ's warning is clear: "But I say to you that anyone who even looks with lust at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart." [23] And what is true of the man is true of the wife. Like the Church of Christ, the faithful wife will keep her heart and love intact for her husband.

If a man and wife are thus united with each other in Christ, nothing can ever come between them. Their whole life will be marked by true joy, true freedom, and mutual devotedness, for their love will be patterned on the love of Christ for His Church. They will pray together, suffer together, hope in God together. Nothing can halt or slacken the ardor and fervor of such love that is ever faithful. The joys that make them seek and unite with each other will never abate, and the sorrows and sufferings that life may bear will be means of bringing them closer to God. The delights of the first years of marriage, delights which are so strongly blended with what is merely human and natural in love, will be followed by a higher and more spiritual love, one in which the senses play a less important part and the life of the soul predominates. When two people love each other in this way —in Christ, that is—nothing can destroy such love; it is stronger than death, since it is in the soul and the soul does not die. After death, such a man and wife will find themselves reunited forever in God, to be companions through all eternity.

II. THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

As we have seen, among baptized persons conjugal love is to become love in Christ. Its end, moreover, is not merely to bring man and wife together but, normally, to produce an effect that goes beyond husband and wife, an effect that is both the fruit

and the living expression of their union, namely, the child. It is the child that gives real meaning and direction to everything in the home. He is in fact the most basic reason for its existence. According to the plan of the Creator, the family is to be the birthplace of the elect; in it the City of God has its beginning.[24]

I. THE BIRTH OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

Had He so wished, God could have filled heaven with the number of the elect all by Himself, without the help of His creatures. But it is His will that man and wife should share in His creative productiveness. Hence, they are enjoined by Him to unite for the accomplishment of a common task in which, whenever its effect is realized, all three divine Persons have deigned to intervene each time. In other words, all the Trinity is operative whenever a child of God is conceived. The parents are instrumental in providing the body, but God alone gives the soul. Thus, the mystery of fatherhood and motherhood receives its deepest meaning; it is to be an intentional and purposive co-operation in the creative action of God. Hence the grandeur and dignity of the act by which human life is transmitted and perpetuated.

If parents are truly inspired with a sense of their sublime mission, they will not fail to unite their mind and heart with the designs of the creative Intelligence. The three divine Persons wait on the consent of parents before exercising Their almighty power by which a soul is called forth from nothingness, even as They deigned to await the concurrence of Mary's fiat before bringing about the incarnation of the Word. In the eyes of God everything pertaining to the union of two beings of flesh is sacred and sanctifying, provided that both are animated by the same Christian ideal and the same wish and desire to transmit life. Hence, this is a great sacrament, indeed, which is instrumental in securing the terrestrial birth of the children of God.

2. THE EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

The procreation of children is only one step in the task of building a home. Nature herself demands that procreation be followed by education. St. Thomas hit on a splendid phrase when he described the educative office of parents as a "continual generation." A true father or mother is one who not only gives bodily life but also strives earnestly to provide and promote the life of the soul. From the supernatural point of view, education is but a long and continued bringing forth of life in God.

In entrusting to parents the care of a being endowed with immortality, the Creator binds them to the grave obligation of watching over the destiny of this soul that was created for the everlasting vision of God. To educate children means, therefore, to lead them up to God. It means to provide them with all the material and spiritual helps that are necessary for the full growth and development of their baptismal grace; and it means also to teach them how to conduct themselves in this world as children of God who are en route, so to speak, to their Father's house.

According to the Christian outlook, the whole work of education reduces itself to the task of forming Christ in the soul of the child.[25] Indeed, in the present economy of redemption and salvation the whole sum and substance of the events of this world should be made to serve the work of forming Christ in us. The family is the privileged place in which is brought about the initial configuration to the only-begotten Son of the Father, whose sonship by nature is the model and exemplar of our divine sonship by adoption. Parents are charged with the solemn duty to provide for the child's baptism, by which he becomes a new creature in Christ; and once he has been baptized, all the activities of the family circle should be constantly directed to the task of strengthening and intensifying this living image of Christ in his soul.

The philosophy of naturalism and secularism has been responsible in the modern world for losing sight of the profoundly

supernatural character without which true education is impossible. The goal of secular education is not to form Christians in the image of God, but to develop the mere natural man. Modern pedagogy forgets that the real subject of education is not merely man as an organism, or even man as composed of body and soul, but a child of God, redeemed by Christ. And yet, in this matter of education as in everything else, it is of decisive importance to know exactly what is the condition of man's nature that is to be educated. And here is where modern pedagogy fails most tragically. It has no real grasp of human nature as it actually is, and it does not recognize that this nature is to be elevated, which is to say, educated, to God.

In particular, it is ignorant, or at least neglectful, of the fact of original sin and its effects on human nature in all its manifold aspects: its effects in the physical, the moral, and the intellectual order. The result is that, while it boasts of a realistic approach to education, its very principles bar it from knowing man as he really is, thereby foredooming to failure all its efforts to achieve true education. On the other hand, we who are Christians know, and we should never for a moment forget it, that the child to be educated bears within him the mark and the burden of the sins of the race; that every birth to the life of the Spirit is a rebirth in Christ; that all true and integral education is in fact a process of re-education and restoration. Consequently, we also know that it is futile and unrealistic to expect to succeed in the work of restoring order and harmony in the nature of the child, both in the natural and supernatural realm, without the help of the redeeming grace of the Word Incarnate; for His grace alone can heal the manifold and manifest wounds that sin has left in his nature; it alone can produce in him the perfect image of Christ.

3. THE CONTROL OF THE SENSES

Man in his entirety, his body as well as his soul, is ordained to be conformed to Christ. Accordingly, the education of the child

must begin with his sense life, which must be so disciplined and controlled that in every action the primacy of the spiritual is maintained. A mother, therefore, who is wise and watchful will begin to train the child in the proper use of all his sense faculties long before he comes to the age of reason. For it should be remembered that even though reason, and therefore conscience, lie dormant in the infant and small child, the basic character and attitude of his later life depend to a great extent on the sort of bodily habits he develops in his first years. The reason for this lies in a fundamental principle of human psychology, namely, in the fact that even the highest intellectual and spiritual activity of man begins with and is always accompanied by some activity of the senses. That is why it is so important that already in this first phase of sense activity, a phase that is largely on the reflex level, the child be properly educated.

There are two great Christian virtues which serve to keep the senses under the rule of reason and faith. These are the virtues of fortitude and temperance. At the outset, however, let it be clearly understood that the aim of the virtues is not to destroy the passions of man, which is quite impossible, but to put them to right use in the service of God. As a matter of fact, the whole art of education, especially in the period of infancy and adolescence, consists precisely in knowing how to direct and control these wonderful powers of the soul which we call the passions, and which are the wellsprings of those deep and almost irresistible strivings that so often make for great men and great saints. The human nature of Christ Himself was endowed with an extraordinarily refined and perceptive sensibility, vibrant with life and energy. But all His love and sorrow and joy was subject to the will of the Father; all was made to serve Christ in accomplishing His mandate to redeem the world.

As already remarked, it is through the virtue of temperance that the passions of our sense nature are brought under the rule of reason, so that all the impulses and inclinations of the flesh are made obedient to the spirit. A temperate man is resolutely

sober and chaste on every occasion. Even though the practice of temperance and sobriety may not attract so much attention as some other virtues, in this matter of character formation and moral training these virtues play a role that is absolutely fundamental. Hence, in a home where proper vigilance is exercised in regard to the upbringing and education of children, not only will parents not encourage them to excess in eating and drinking by their own bad example or through neglect and indifference, but they will put forth untiring efforts to prevent their children falling into habits of gluttony and greediness in any form whatsoever. Even the physical health of the children will be the better for it; and beyond that, they will grow in the endurance that is necessary to keep the body properly disposed for the higher tasks and functions of the soul.

Important as it is for the child to form right habits in regard to eating and drinking, it is even more important that he be properly trained and educated in regard to purity. This is the principal work of the virtue of temperance, namely, to train the child to habits of purity. Here the role of the parents, especially of the mother, is irreplaceable. The child must learn to keep himself pure from the cradle on, and not merely after he has grown up. As a matter of fact, in the realm of purity, as in others, Christianity has accomplished miracles, so to speak, through all the twenty centuries of its existence. Indeed, the victory of the Spirit of God over the flesh has been manifested so persistently among us that the virtue of purity is recognized by all the world as a virtue that is specifically Christian, as a summit one reaches only with the help of the grace of Christ. Virginity is like a lily that flowers only under the sheltering tree, the tree of the Cross.

In point of fact, evangelical chastity takes in a very wide ground; it extends to all walks of life. There is the chastity of young men and women before entering marriage. There is conjugal chastity, which keeps man and wife faithful to each other under the watchful care of God. There is the chastity of widows,

by which they are freed from the burden of the flesh and the memory of ephemeral love, so as to be wholly dedicated to God. And there is the purity of virgins, by which they consecrate themselves, whole and entire, to Christ. It is only in Christian surroundings that one can observe, in its full splendor, the complete and absolute triumph of the spirit over the flesh. The priest who has learned to discern the secret of such purity is not surprised to find that most often its source goes back to the home, to a family life that was truly Christian. There the child learned the habits of good taste and good breeding; there, too, he learned to make use of the supernatural grace that would keep him pure. No one knows how many priests and religious there are who owe this miracle of inviolable purity to their mothers as well as to Christ, who came to them in baptism and in every Eucharistic Communion.

In addition to temperance, there is another genuinely Christian virtue that is indispensable for the education of the child. This, as stated earlier, is the virtue of fortitude together with the virtues connected with it. Unfortunately, there are many Catholics today who seem to be unaware of the absolute necessity of this virtue and of the decisive role it plays. There are many homes whose respectability in the eyes of the world leaves nothing to be desired; but their moral fiber has been enervated by slavish subservience to the bourgeois ideal of self-coddling. In such homes the moral training of children lacks vigor and hardihood. It is distressing to note that too many of our Catholics appear to have forgotten that for more than three centuries the early Church was a persecuted Church, a Church of martyrs. We have yielded much too much to the spirit of the world. Instead of families that can produce nothing but soft and effeminate individuals, who have no thought but for their comfort and pleasure, and of whom we have far too many today, what the Church needs—the Church militant, the Church that is on the open march—is families that will furnish her with men and women of resolute character, with apostles fired with an indomitable spirit

of conquest for Christ, ready and willing to undergo or undertake, without fear and falter, even the greatest ventures in order to secure the triumph of God's cause. Fortitude is the virtue that our generation lacks most.

This is not an overstatement, since the cardinal virtue of fortitude covers an immense field of action, extending to every condition and circumstance of life. Two essential traits mark the man of fortitude. In the first place, he is, as already intimated, indomitable in his courage to undertake great enterprises for the sake of God's glory; secondly, his perseverance in pursuing God's work is untiring, no matter how great the difficulties. Nothing stops the man of fortitude. He will either see his cause triumphant, or die for the sake of it.

As for the virtues connected with fortitude, first and foremost among them is the virtue of magnanimity or nobleness of mind and soul. This virtue, together with personal valor, gives the man of fortitude full freedom of action in the pursuit of his aims. The magnanimous man does not stoop to meanness, and his perspective is large. He sees whole. For example, it is the virtue of magnanimity that prompts a man to pursue designs that are vast in scope, designs that often change the course of a science or nation. If a man is magnanimous, he wants to be able to help the Church and the whole world to save itself from evil and misfortune; he wants to bring it out of the level of mediocrity, and steer its course of action upward to God.

Ours is a catholic religion. We ought, therefore, to have a special attraction for a virtue such as magnanimity, since of its very nature it would tend to raise the focus of our spiritual vision to the vast and lofty perspective of our faith. It is regrettable that we Catholics have not always adjusted our outlook to the larger view of the Church. Why, for instance, did we for such a long time shy away from taking an active part in politics and government? What excuse was there for this timidity, which was not without blame on our part? Why were we afraid to act? Was not our conservatism and our intransigence a pretext for

our laziness and love of ease? [26] Under the specious plea of fostering humility and self-effacement, too many Christian parents and educators stifle whatever impulse their children may have to be bold of action and strenuous in effort, as would befit apostles and disciples of Christ that have been commanded by Him to go forth and conquer the world. It is high time that we return to the true spirit of the gospel and once again realize that Christ came into the world to bring not the peace that debilitates and demoralizes, but the sword; and that only "violence," that is, the bold courage demanded by the faith and the fearlessness that makes saints, will gain the kingdom of heaven.[27]

Certainly, the influence that prevailed upon Catholics to remove themselves from the field of public life and action and to retire into comfortable isolation, certainly this was not the work of the Church, whose missionary soul and zeal breathes the very spirit of magnanimity. The authentic voice of the Church is rather to be found in her call to Catholic Action, in her earnest exhortation to bring Christ into the market place and into every environment, and in her admonition to fight against and overcome all forces of evil by constructing a new social order, a new Christian society.

It should be remembered, also, that merely to undertake great enterprises is not enough. Having begun, we must persevere. Nothing must turn us from our task, neither threats nor difficulties, neither setbacks nor the lure of ease and comfort. To hold fast to the end: that must be the rule. It is when we are so inspired by the spirit of sacrifice as to be ready to die that the virtue of fortitude assumes its highest expression. And is there anything more Christian than that? The whole gospel cries out that the disciple of Christ, following his Master, is to carry his cross each day of his life. That is why it is so important that from his infancy the child be accustomed to the spirit of sacrifice that is the quintessence of Christianity, the very soul of all holiness. This sort of education, moreover, which builds sturdy and dauntless character in the child is the greatest blessing he can receive.

Unhappily, those parents are all too few who develop in their children those manly qualities that make for a strong people, determined to be faithful to God to the point, if need be, of martyrdom. Yet without such qualities, without this spirit of sacrifice, nothing great or worthwhile is ever accomplished on earth. The modern world is steeped in a materialism that is sensual and self-indulgent. What it needs more than anything else is the Christian family, where it can relearn to appreciate the value and importance of this spirit of total self-immolation. Only through such spirit of sacrifice does human life become something great and noble.

4. THE TRAINING OF THE MIND

The reason why in modern life the virtue of fortitude and other Christian virtues are conspicuous by their absence lies primarily in the ever-increasing apostasy of the world. This is the basic root of the evil. The modern mind, having denied Christ, has also lost the capacity to appreciate the meaning and importance of God. The gospel is no longer the light of the world. The attitude of most men is that God has been completely eliminated. No longer is He considered the supreme goal of life. Today men are preoccupied with the material; their souls are incapable of looking beyond the needs of earth.

Formerly, the atmosphere of the home was Christian. Its traditional beliefs and its religious practices provided a suitable environment where the faith could take deep root in the soul of the child and his character grew strong. When he arrived at adolescence and manhood, his soul was prepared to ward off, with the help of God, the growing strength of passion. This is not to say that formerly men did not sin. Our forebears, men and sinners like us, were not immune to transgression. But in their soul there always remained the faith, which was for them an unfailing source of strength to rise again to a better life. After their moments of weakness and sin, they knew how to get down

on their knees and ask pardon of God. They always understood and acknowledged that their offenses against God were something culpable; whereas the children of our homes and our dechristianized schools, the youth of our cinemas and dance halls, do not even know what sin means. Today, the ideal of the faith is gone.

The great task of the Christian home is precisely to create and develop an understanding and appreciation of the faith in the mind of the child. For the faith, any faith in fact, does make a difference. The eternal truths we profess in the Creed have an enormous influence in practical life. Experience proves, if proof were needed, that the highest truths of religion naturally and almost subconsciously become part and parcel of one's life, serving as the basic motives of one's actions. It is doctrine, religious doctrine, that molds the soul and character of a people, and accounts for the force and energy that marks their activities in the world. So, too, it is religious convictions that guide our lives in every detail. Quite simply, the great idea that both dominates and divides the world is the idea of God. It is as simple, and as basic, as that. If the saints in heaven could speak to us, by far the majority of them would say that it was in the early years of their life, in the family training and environment, that they learned those guiding precepts and principles which made their lives great.

Moreover, in order that the growing mind may come to have a mature, and not merely a superficial, understanding and appreciation of the faith, it is extremely important he receive all his learning, even that of the secular branches, in a Christian atmosphere and environment. It is for this reason that the Church, the guardian of the faith of Christians, has always claimed the absolute right to have her own schools, colleges, and universities. For neutrality in education is a childish myth, not to say a fraud. Education that destroys the faith which dwells in the soul and turns the mind against God is not neutral. All too often this is what happens under so-called neutral education. At best such

education results in the anomalous position of so many modern minds, namely, the anomaly of possessing great scientific erudition, but without the corresponding, and necessary, growth in the understanding of religious teaching. Unless the mind has constantly cultivated a deeper understanding of faith, it will not be adequately armed for the great battles that must be fought for the faith in the service of Christ. The faith of such an individual will come off second best in the struggle against the assaults of violent passion, or in the battleground of ideas and objections raised against it. Religious and secular knowledge must grow together. Parents have the very grave obligation to see to it that the religious education of their children attending college or the university keeps pace with their secular learning. It is not right for a Christian to be without a thorough understanding of the fundamental teachings of Christianity.

The point is that theology is not a science for the clergy only. Theology is the normal need of any maturing mind that reflects on the mysteries of faith and their repercussion in practical life. Every educated Christian should be solidly grounded in theology, but in a way that is adapted to his personal vocation and his role in society. Thus, some lay people, for the benefit of their own interior life, ought to have a deeper knowledge of the mystery of the Trinity; others should be directed in their reading with a view to gaining a more profound understanding of the mystery of Christ, a more supernatural comprehension of the Church's mission on earth, or a more evident certitude regarding the life beyond. It rests with parents to arouse and foster in the child a desire for religious truth and a deep love of the gospel, as the gospel is to be their guide all through life.

There is another matter that needs stressing, namely, that a child will not always be a child. Hence, in bringing up a child one must think of tomorrow. Instead of keeping him under perpetual tutelage, we should teach him how to direct himself under the watchful care of God. Here we touch on one of the most serious defects in our religious training. We prescribe and insist

on practice, but we do not give sufficient attention to building up convictions and principles that would serve as inward motives of action. It is not surprising, then, that so often after leaving school or the home our children do not continue to make the gospel their rule of conduct in life.

Furthermore, education cannot be complete without acquiring the virtue of prudence, the queen of the cardinal virtues. This is a virtue of major importance, exercising a universal influence on the conduct of our lives; its function, in fact, is to direct our whole moral life. Yet many parents and educators have not the slightest inkling of its importance. Essentially, the role of the virtue of prudence consists in teaching a man how to apply the highest principles and insights of faith to the thousand and one vicissitudes of practical life. In so doing it helps the Christian to find and pursue the correct approach to life and its problems; that is, it helps to direct him in acquiring what may be called the Catholic sense or outlook. A virtue of the practical intellect, prudence lends a man the ability to select in every instance the path or direction that will lead to God, no matter how difficult or bewildering the circumstances with which he may be encumbered. It points out where one's duty lies on every occasion.

Thus, the prudent man acts neither with undue haste nor undue delay. He takes counsel, consulting those who are qualified to advise. He knows how to wait for the opportune moment to act. Then he proceeds, giving the command of the will by which the law of God is brought to bear on his own life and that of his subordinates. Contrary to popular conception, the basic mark of prudence is not to reconcile all differences or to take a middle position in everything; instead, the prudent man is characterized by the spirit of decision and command. Jesus was an incomparable model of prudence when, instead of a life of ease and charm, He chose a life of open warfare against evil, embracing the work of redemption that would inexorably bring Him to the sufferings and torments of Golgotha and thereby give

glory to the Father. Similarly, a mind that is formed in the school of Christ, a mind that is truly Christian, will seek its light in, and draw its decisions from, the knowledge of the Cross.

5. THE TRAINING OF THE WILL

The will is like a masterwheel to which Christian education must give very careful attention, for on it depends the destiny of the child. It is the moral disposition of the will that determines whether one's life will be holy or wicked. The angels who appeared at Bethlehem knew this. "Glory to God in the highest," they exclaimed, "and peace on earth among men of good will," [28] that is, to souls confirmed in the love of God.

The will is the seat of the highest Christian virtue, namely, of charity. It is also the principal theater in which the moral battle of life is fought. Endowed with freedom, this spiritual faculty presides over all our actions, so that no human act ever takes place without its prompting and consent. We are holy or sinful according as the will is for or against God. Aptitudes of body and mind count little with God—by Him men are judged on love.

It cannot be emphasized too much that from the earliest possible period the child should be taught to practice the love of God, so that he may be accustomed to do so throughout his life. Then, when the end arrives, he will quickly come to see his God "face to face." [29] St. John of the Cross strongly recommended the practice of the love of God to contemplative souls who sought to arrive at the highest level of the transforming union. But, due allowance made, this practice is to be recommended to all Christians, since they are called to the same vision of God that will establish them in unity with the Trinity. The ideal that all men on earth who seek God must try to reach is the ideal of perfect love. The precept of charity admits of no reservations: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy

whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength." [30] Let parents and educators, therefore, regard the child under their care as a child of God, whom they have the task of conducting safely home to the Trinity. The obligation of parents to provide for the proper education of their children in regard to the senses and the mind is grave indeed, but even more grave and more important is their obligation to secure the correct training of the will, for this is the faculty by which we cling to God or turn away from Him, perhaps forever.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux, who, as remarked earlier, has been called the greatest saint of recent times, was always deeply grateful to her parents and her older sister, Pauline, for having taught her from early childhood to do all things for love. Similarly, there are ever so many good Christian mothers who make it a habit to recommend to their children that they perform everything, even the smallest acts of self-denial, for love of and to please Jesus. No method of education is more efficacious in a child—and in adults as well—than the way of love. We can put our absolute trust in this capital point of the teaching of Christ, the supreme educator of all men. Love, He said, "is the greatest and the first commandment," [31] the commandment on which depend all others.

The more a child grows in the love of God, the more steadfast will he be in life and the more faithful in the performance of all duties. To educate, then, means to teach how to love; it means to develop in a child the perfect love of God and men. Love, as we all know from experience, refuses nothing. He who loves God dedicates his whole life to the glory of God; and he who loves his fellow men in Christ will exert himself with all his strength to bring them to God, the source of true happiness. Thus love, and love alone, is the school that can inspire zeal and devotion, absolute disinterestedness, and perfect self-abnegation. Consequently, to teach a child to love God above everything else is to provide him with a source of strength than which there is

none better or more effective for developing great and heroic character.

6. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Besides the habits and virtues we have considered, the child must also begin to acquire in the home that sense of social responsibility which is so necessary today if the world is to be won again to Christ. The love of God cannot exist without the love of neighbor. St. John is very explicit in the matter: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar." [32] Jesus Himself made it clear that brotherly love for all men would be the distinguishing mark of His faithful disciples: "By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." [33] In this connection it is only right and just to observe that, through earnest dedication to the spirit of the gospel and through serious study of social conditions, the specialized forms of present-day Catholic Action have recaptured the awareness of the fundamental role of charity, as well as a deep consciousness of the oneness and solidarity of the vast mystical body of Christ.

Consequently, notwithstanding its intimate union, the family is not to be a closed, and closed off, circle. Christian charity demands that it remain wide open to the right influences, and that it be untiring in helping to relieve the misery and distress of others, to gain by its pervading kindly action the hearts of all around. Even at best, however, the sense of social responsibility cannot be fully developed within the confines of the family group; such broader growth comes later through association with the world and its institutions. Nevertheless, through the example and precept of parents the child should acquire in the home the beginnings of two great social virtues without which peace and order in the world can neither be established nor maintained. These are the virtues of justice and charity. By the one, each man is given his due; by the other, men learn to love each other as children of a common Father who is awaiting them all in heaven.

III. CHRIST IN THE HOME

In the sacrament of marriage a man and a woman, we have said, enter on a lifelong union under God. Christ enters their home with them. The sacramental grace will be for them, and through them, as an unfailing source of life-giving water. This grace will be at their disposal throughout life, providing them, every day and every moment, with all the material and spiritual helps necessary to establish and bring up a family in Christ. The consent given at the sacrament, like the formula of religious profession or Mary's fiat at the Annunciation, binds them under God to a lasting and definitive vocation. If they are faithful to their pledge, they will be aided not only by the essential grace of the sacrament of their vocation but also by the countless actual graces that flow from it like a steady stream; thus they will have the supernatural strength to make continuing progress toward the highest degree of holiness. The grace of personal sanctification, the grace to help and support each other, the grace to bring up and educate their children properly, in fact, all the graces needed for family life, are contained in principle in the grace of the sacrament which they received on the day of marriage, when they were united forever in the presence of God.

1. THE FAMILY: THE SCHOOL OF HOLINESS

The union of man and wife blessed by God obliges them both to work toward holiness. Every action as husband or wife, every deed as father or mother, belongs to God. Because of the widespread deterioration of morality in the modern world, we have grown unaccustomed to seeing married life in its divine ideal and in its providential mission in the world. All too often we forget that in the plan of God the family is to be a school of holiness. There, as in a holy sanctuary, are to be born and nurtured all the redeemed of Christ, the true sons of God, called to be coheirs of the Word Incarnate by the grace of baptism and citizens with the angels and saints, and destined, also, to live forever in the

unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus the family on earth lays the foundation for the family of God's children that is to live forever in the splendor of the saints.

2. CONJUGAL SPIRITUALITY

The vocation of the family to work toward holiness begins with the wedding ceremony. On the day of their marriage, man and wife bestowed Christ on each other in the sacrament, and this exchange was a symbol of what their union should be, namely, a continuous advance together to perfect conformity with Christ. In the grace of the sacrament lies the source of a complete doctrine of spiritual life for married people, that is, of a spirituality that has its own principles, not reducible to other forms of Christian holiness. Perhaps the special character of conjugal spirituality has not been sufficiently recognized. Married people, in other words, have not to borrow their particular way of sanctification from men and women in the monastery or convent. They have only to live according to the demands and obligations imposed by the duties of their state of life, and they will be saints, great saints.

The law of God fully approves their enjoying the legitimate pleasures of the flesh; it encourages their giving each other special tokens of love as well as mutual help and support. It is in keeping with God's law that the wife, by nature inclined to be frail and emotional, should find solace and support in a creature of flesh. And it is in keeping with the same law that a man should find in his life companion the love and sympathy his heart craves to soothe the burden of his daily toil. Yet the law of God also urges them to reach higher, to transform their love into love in Christ, as befits baptized men and women. Man and wife must do all with, and in, Christ. They should pray together with Christ at their side, and suffer together with Christ at their side; and even in death they need not be separated if they die in Christ.

It is not too difficult to identify the basic principles of conjugal spirituality, since it contains elements common to all Christian life, together with certain duties and obligations that are proper to married people. Still, there is one mistake that could easily be made. What I mean is that it would be wrong to conceive the different ways of Christian spirituality as resulting from the mere addition of a few special practices to a basic and common body of principles, the additions varying according to the circumstances of one's state of life and its incumbent duties. Such a conception would ignore the organic coherence and the profound unity that pervade every particular form of Christian holiness. As a matter of fact, all of Christianity must be thought through and lived in every form of spirituality, but this must be done with a view to the special purpose any particular form fulfills in the Church, or the special need it is designed to meet either in the world or in the religious life. Thus, everything in the spiritual life of a priest should be focussed on his priesthood; and everything in the Benedictine or Dominican life is motivated by the basic principles of the religious life. Similarly, everything in the conjugal life of Christians should be inspired by the mind of Christ.

In formulating a spirituality for married people, one must remember that man and wife are called upon to become holy in the company of each other and through each other by living together in closest union under the same roof. Marriage means life together for two human beings united in complete and most intimate union. All things are to be held in common. There should be community of thoughts and sentiments, of prayer and suffering, of bed and board, in a word, complete community of life in every respect until death. An authentic spirituality for married life needs to be predicated on a realistic understanding of marriage. It is strictly necessary to share everything under the guiding care of Christ: to have, in other words, community of life both as to body and soul, and community of interests in regard to material and moral matters; to have, also, the same hope

and the same desire to serve God. This does not mean, however, that all differences can be suppressed. Even while sharing everything, each must always respect the incommunicable and irreducible individuality of the other; for in every realm, in the physiological and psychological and religious realm, man and wife are and remain not identical, but complementary beings. Even in living together and sharing all they are and all they have, each must show consideration for the other's person and personality. In so doing each will enrich the life and personality of the other.

Indeed, there is no limit to the wealth of blessings and happiness a woman with her love and faithfulness, together with her more direct and intuitive response to every occasion, can bring to a home. The man's contribution, on the other hand, consists in putting the intuitions of his wife to the test of critical reflection, so that in all things there is a sureness that makes for tranquillity of mind, based on absolute trust in the providence of God.

Moreover, when two people living together possess the same virtues of faith, hope, and love, these virtues will achieve more rapid growth in their souls. Their lives will be motivated by the same ideal to strive for holiness. Furthermore, they will also experience continuous growth and development in the practice of all other Christian virtues. Also, on many occasions when trying to decide where his duty lies, the husband will find the more direct insights of his wife to be of great help. Prayer, too, when offered together, is more regular and less neglected, more spontaneous and more in accord with human nature. This is all the more true when it is the prayer of two beings who love each other deeply and who are both eager to advance in union with God. Together they will be stronger in facing the difficulties and problems of life; and together they will acquire a greater regard for purity. Their respect for purity, the deepest ground for which lies in the fact that by baptism they became temples of the Holy Spirit, will keep them chaste and faithful to each other as the living temples of the Trinity they are.

It is quite readily admitted that the foregoing presentation represents the ideal. Happily, however, there are homes, though not nearly enough, where conjugal life is so carried on as to be a continuous growth in union with God through Christ. In such homes man and wife share all things, both the goods of body and those of soul. There, life together, in the fullest sense of the word, becomes a reality for two human beings. God is always present to watch and care for them, and to facilitate their upward march to Him. And Christ of the sacrament is there, too, watching over their marriage and their love.

3. FAMILY SPIRITUALITY

A conjugal union that is blessed by God will not delay in founding a family. The grace of marriage, which before was centered on strengthening the intimate union of two beings joined in Christ, now takes on a broader aspect, becoming also the grace that issues in offspring. Having become father and mother before God, husband and wife now have charge of souls. Through the grace of the sacrament this new relationship can be the means for great progress in spiritual growth. The birth of children is a sign that God has chosen them not only to sanctify each other but also to form Christ in other human beings and to guide them along the path that leads to God.

With the arrival of children conjugal life becomes family life. Simultaneous with this enlargement of the domestic horizon appears a new outlook in regard to spiritual life. No longer can husband and wife think only of themselves and their own needs, but they have also to think of all their children. In some ways, their whole life is transformed. The husband now sees his wife, his life-companion, as the mother of his children; and the wife cherishes her husband as the father of the family, the head and guardian of the home. The husband is justly proud of being a father; in his hands, first of all, lies the care and direction of the family. The wife, a mother, becomes the heart and soul of the

home. Not only has conjugal life grown into family life, but conjugal spirituality likewise has evolved into family spirituality.

At this stage of married life the spiritual life and atmosphere of the home enters a new cycle. As the family grows in size each one naturally finds his proper place, as in a well-regulated household. Father and mother begin to feel the burden of their new responsibilities. If there was a time when they could be engrossed, not always unselfishly, in the mere joys of married love, that time is past. Now there are other souls in whom, through example and influence, the beginnings of eternal life must not only be implanted but also nurtured. Thus their conjugal love becomes more pure, more disinterested, and more deeply Christian. All this produces in them a change of which they could have had small inkling before. A true father lives only for his children, and a true mother renounces her own interests in favor of her children. The love of husband and wife now takes on something of the sublimity of a priesthood to which is entrusted the care of souls.

It is not unusual, particularly in Christian countries, to observe such complete transformation in married couples, to observe, for example, the change that comes over a young woman when she becomes a mother. In the early days of married life she may have continued to be the somewhat frivolous and thoughtless young lady she was; but with motherhood came earnestness and resolution. What she had been lacking in maturity she acquired with her new responsibilities; and her closeness to God, that also grew and developed.

In a social environment that is truly Catholic, mother and father are acutely aware of the need to live more fervently in Christ, in order that His influence in the home may be more manifest. They go to confession and receive Holy Communion more frequently; they pray more, and more fervently. They are determined to grow in holiness, so that their children, too, may grow in the love and service of God. And when they give counsel or command to their little ones, or admonish their older ones,

they themselves are also reminded of the precepts of the gospel and the obligations imposed by God's law. Flesh of their flesh, endowed by God with an immortal soul, their children are constantly under their solicitous care and attention. Often, as they reflect on the possible dangers and pitfalls that may befall them, they find it difficult to suppress a trembling shudder of fear and apprehension. Wherever their children go they follow them in thought and concernment. Many a time their anxious musings are abruptly halted by a fervent sigh of prayer. "Lord Jesus, watch over them!" How often parents voice such earnest and heartfelt ejaculations! Thus, as we review the work and office of parents, we see the teaching of St. Paul verified, namely that "women will be saved by childbearing, if they continue in faith and love and holiness with modesty." [34] The same, quite obviously, may be said of fathers who are faithful in discharging their obligations. We see, too, that according to the plan of divine providence there is a wonderful reciprocity of influence between parents and children. Not only are parents teachers of children, but children become true masters of spirituality to their parents.

Needless to say, the first beneficiaries of family life are the children. Everything is directed to their physical, intellectual, and moral development. Hence, the family may be compared to a master mold that forms the character of all children and all countries. In a very real sense, all that we are we owe to this first and foremost school of life. For the impressions of the home are the enduring ones. With a child, for example, even the smallest piece of advice from father or mother is like the word of God Himself. The ideas and opinions of his parents quickly become his ideas and opinions. He naturally acquires the likes and dislikes of those around him. Day by day his moral and spiritual outlook takes on definite form and development in the family. Consequently, if the home reflects a strong and virile Christian life, he will learn how to appraise all things according to the mind of God, and he will be inspired to imitate Christ in his own

life. A well-ordered home will have a definite program for prayer, work, and recreation. The family answers the basic needs of man. Accordingly, there will be time for work and time for joyous recreation and relaxation, time for prayer and time for assisting at Holy Mass, time, also, for silence and recollection to permit the soul to renew its more intimate converse with God.

As for the organization of the household, that depends primarily on the head of the family. In this matter, especially, he should act with great prudence. For one thing, the order of the house should be sufficiently flexible to allow for adjustment to the special circumstances that arise so often in family life. As we have already indicated, there should be time and place for everything. Work should alternate with recreation, so that the family can get together for those moments of more intimate and more spontaneous rejoicing that contribute so much to family solidarity. There will also be moments to remember their common sorrows, moments to renew their common hopes, and moments to arouse their common enthusiasm for the realization of their common ideals. Thus in the daily course of family life the soul and character of its members is formed, and this in a manner that is neither too rigid nor thoughtlessly conformed to indolent convention, but in a manner that is based on the real needs of life and the promptings of the Spirit of God, with due respect and consideration for each one's individual personality. In such a home the least little practice or adornment can help to supernaturalize and sanctify every joy as well as every sorrow. For example, at the head of the bed of a young girl whose home happened to be a magnificent castle, there hung engraved these words: "Do not let this home on earth make you forget your home in heaven." In that castle God was truly present.

Even in a well-regulated home, however, there will be occasions of misunderstanding and conflict, all the more so when children reach the critical age of adolescence. On such occasions a kindly word of correction from the father or from an older brother or sister will be enough to set matters right without

leaving any lasting scars. And the mother will always be there with her love and affection, bearing all things patiently, knowing how to wait for the right moment to bring an errant child back to reason. All is then forgiven and forgotten; and the whole family resumes its normal course of action.

The influence of the home, it should be remembered, simply cannot be overestimated. There are countless men and women in the world who meet the problems and difficulties of life with steadfast courage. Not least among the things that sustain them in their daily struggle is the example that was set in the home where they were born and grew up. So often—is it not true?—what is best in us is due to the happy memory we have of our father or mother or both. The writer can still hear the voice of a grand old man who proudly exclaimed to him with tears in his eyes: "If I am a priest, it's my mother who, after God, deserves all the credit."

4. THE FAMILY AND MODERN SOCIETY

We have said that the importance of the family in forming the character of individuals and nations is basic and incalculable. An indirect proof of this is readily seen in the moral decadence of modern society. All too often today the child grows up in a home that is divided and undermined by infidelities on the part of parents. Small wonder, then, that the child for his part knows just one thing: the pursuit of pleasure, or the pursuit of money for the sake of pleasure. Lacking the environment of a decent and upright home, he does not even learn the most essential duties of life, but instead is always running off to idle and empty diversions in the café, the tavern, the movies, the theater, and the dance hall. To a great extent, also, free love and trial marriages, which are quickly followed by separation and divorce, have superseded legitimate unions, which are productive and make for strong character in individuals and nations. Furthermore, an alarming number of married people make a regular

practice of voluntary and unnatural sterility, using a thousand and one precautions and systematical calculation to ensure their evil purpose. The result is that the cohabitation of man and wife no longer leads to the establishment of a real home, one in which they would be intimately united in everything, and naturally reproductive.

Hence, it is not surprising, and not merely coincidental, that the world has never seen so many selfish and degenerate individuals. It takes little imagination, indeed, to realize the incalculable havoc and ruin caused by the great numbers of homeless men and women who have strayed into lives of sin. Our great cities literally teem with lost individuals who are cut off from all family ties and from all moral bonds, whose character and outlook are without guiding principle. In their quest of pleasure these wretched individuals have been reduced to the condition of criminals and evildoers, even though externally they may be well mannered, exercising great care to be polite and courteous. Their life of shame and crime leaves them no rest, but is constantly goading them on to more evil, sometimes in spite of themselves. Like all souls, theirs too was created by God, but real happiness has long since eluded its grasp. Many, all too many, grew up without a mother who could have taught them to pray to and hope in God. Nothing is more tragic and pitiful than to be an orphan from childhood on, or to be, day in and day out, the unhappy victim and witness of a divided home. At the last judgment there will be much excuse for those children who had to grow up and find their way in life without the help of a mother or father. But for those who were responsible for these tragedies. . . .

So much for the evil effects of an unworthy home, or of no home at all. On the other hand, in a home where the moral atmosphere is sound and wholesome, all this is different. There the child grows into a well-disciplined adult. Spontaneously he imitates the actions and manners of his father or older brother and sister. Those he loves become his models and heroes. Like his

father, he wants to be strong and brave. From his mother he learns how to yield his own will and put himself at the service of others cheerfully and even, it may be, heroically. The example of an older brother will win him over to being generous and devoted; and the presence of a sister will often be the decisive influence in keeping himself pure, the master of his appetites. From her he may learn to be gentle and considerate and to acquire an appreciation for the habit of prayer and genuine love. From all, he learns to be faithful and devoted in serving God and men.

Still, it would be naive to think that family training and influence is everything. Even the best parents sometimes find that they have brought forth and nurtured the most selfish creatures, perhaps even murderers. No matter how constantly solicitous they may have been, all their efforts only resulted in deplorable failure. No one can guarantee unfailing success. The natural temperament of each child is an unpredictable element. Besides that, he has free will, which God Himself respects. Also, we cannot compel cooperation with and fidelity to divine grace. In addition, there are so many outside influences, often as unavoidable as dangerous, such as the matter of sex promiscuity, which is so characteristic of this apostate and degenerate age in which we live. Nevertheless, after all is said and done, the general rule remains: like father like son, like mother like daughter. Saints—or criminals—are made in the home.

The profound and all-pervading social repercussions of this truth should be obvious to all. For this reason do statesmen worthy of the name always seek to protect and promote the welfare of the family, the nursery in which are prepared the citizens of tomorrow. There is no doubt at all that a family program in conformity with the laws of nature and the laws of God, carried out for a period of fifty years by a strong and effective government, would do more good for a nation than all other social reforms combined. This explains why the Church maintains such great vigilance to safeguard the rights of the family; why she

insists that the right and the duty to educate children belongs first of all to the parents. The school is meant to serve the family, and whatever powers it exercises it holds by delegation from the family. The child belongs to the family before it belongs to the state. In this age of totalitarian laicism, it is more important than ever to keep in mind that the right of the family in regard to the child is primordial, being prior to that of both state and school. The common good itself depends on the observance of this right. A legislative program that aimed to provide every family with its daily bread and with an education for its members that is in line with the legitimate aspirations of the family, would constitute one of the strongest foundations for national greatness as well as for peace and harmony among all groups of citizens.

More than that, if Christian principles were once more to penetrate and permeate every home, if the spirit of the gospel became the guiding light of the world, and if it inspired and influenced our understanding of the needs of different people throughout the world, needs that vary so much from one place of the globe to the next, under such conditions, I say, we could hope to see all men again united in one faith and one love. If this were to happen, we should see, already in this world, the realization of perfect unity throughout the whole mystical body of Christ. A hopeless dream, you say; but remember that this is the divine mission of the Church; and with all her strength, yet without any illusions as to the difficulties of the task, the Church seeks, and will seek, to realize this Christian ideal.

As far as lies in her power, therefore, the Church will always try to make rulers aware of the preponderant role that the family exercises in forming the intellectual and moral character of the individual. As the twig is bent, so will it grow. From her long experience the Church knows that the virtues and habits of the home become the virtues and habits of public life, and that the Christians of tomorrow are fostered in the home of today.

Not so many years ago, in the cemetery of Lisieux, written in unskilled hand over the tombstone of the father and mother of

St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, a visitor could have read these noble words: "Thank you, dear Christian parents, for having given us a saint to watch over us." There you have it. Seen through the eyes of the faith, the family is the place divine providence chooses to be the sprouting ground of holiness. The family gives birth to the children of God, forms Christ in their souls, and prepares the elect for the City of God.

5. THE HOLY FAMILY

The most sublime holiness on earth that the Blessed Trinity was ever to behold was found within the framework of the quiet and toilsome life of a workman's home. In that home the position of father was held by a just man who loved his God, his wife, and his adoptive Son. Outwardly, there was nothing to distinguish him from other men of Galilee; it was the holiness and grandeur of his soul that set him above the rest. He was a faithful servant. His love of God was incomparably greater than that of the seraphim and all the blessed in heaven. His life and holiness centered around the hypostatic order itself; and even though he himself was not intrinsically related to this order, he was yet intimately connected with it by reason of his duties as father with respect to the only-begotten Son. He was the lawful husband of the Mother of the Word Incarnate; and with the exception of her, no creature has ever enjoyed more intimate union and converse with God.

This man's name was Joseph. None of his fellow townsmen who lived with him day after day knew the story of his life nor the fact of his royal descent. But it did not matter. God knew, and that was enough. The eternal Father entrusted to him the care of His Son and the care of the Mother of His Son. Later, his protective role would embrace the entire Church, the whole mystical body of Christ. But that hour of glory was not yet. Now was the period of toil, of obscurity, of silence, of Nazareth.

Sharing his life was a woman, a mother. Her name was Mary.

She was all virgin and all mother. She is, in fact, the Immaculate. Her shining purity and holiness found such favor in the sight of God that from all eternity the Father chose her to be the Mother of His Son. Nothing, whether in the realm of grace or in the kingdom of glory, even approaches the exalted dignity of her divine motherhood. By the term of this motherhood she is intrinsically related to the hypostatic order; indeed, her motherhood united her as no other creature with the Person of the Word, the Word Incarnate who was born of her womb. This great mystery transports her to the innermost reaches of the life of the Trinity, to be the privileged Handmaid of the Father, the Mother of the Son, and the Spouse of the Holy Spirit.

God lavished such fullness of grace on Mary that her holiness far surpasses that of all the angels and saints combined. If faith did not assure us that she is a creature like us, we should be tempted to believe that her nature has more in common with her Son than with the rest of mankind. The excellence of her divine motherhood places her above all creatures, elevating her to the confines of the realm of the divine, and giving her full power over her Son and free access to the Trinity.

Seeing her in her modest home, one would never have guessed what supereminent grandeur she enjoyed in the eyes of God. For outwardly her way of life was most ordinary, altogether similar to the life of other women of Nazareth. No one saw any ecstasies or miracles, only a woman of simple and unpretentious manner, a woman of great charity, always solicitous for the needs of others, as at Cana, and always eager to serve her cousin Elizabeth and all her neighbors. When the young ladies and women of the village met "Miriam" as she was going to the well to get a supply of water for her household needs, they greeted her with a kindly smile, but little did they realize that they had just paid their respects to the all-powerful Mother of God and of men, to the Coredemptress of the world, to the Mother of the Word Incarnate, the Queen of angels and of all saints.

With Joseph and Mary lived a son called Jesus. He grew up

not living by Himself, but mingling with all the children of this little town. Externally, He went and came like the other inhabitants of Nazareth. Like them He earned His daily bread by the sweat of His brow. His hands, also, wore calluses, but His soul was honest and upright. He was seen regularly at the religious services of the synagogue. To all He always gave a helping hand. No one ever knew Him to commit a sin. One day, on the Sabbath, He stepped forward in the synagogue and, taking up the scroll of Isaias, delivered a commentary on it, speaking with an authority that was unheard-of. His fellow citizens could not contain their astonishment. "Where," they asked, "did he get all this? What is this wisdom that is given to him? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" [35] Yes, this was He whom they all knew and whose kindred they knew, for they also lived among them at Nazareth.

Such was the mystery of the Word Incarnate at Nazareth. Who could have known, at that moment, that this man of Galilee, this obscure workingman, was the Word, the Creator equal to His Father, the all-powerful Worker of mankind's redemption, the supreme Judge of the living and the dead, the Lord and Master of the course of history, true God of the entire universe?

A moment's reflection on the Holy Family should make it clear why the Church has chosen the home of Nazareth as the model for all family life. This Family exemplified all the domestic virtues. Work, prayer, the joys of close family ties, love and care of neighbor, the abiding presence of Christ, the primacy of God, whose love inspired everything—all these and more were found there. Such was the home of Nazareth, such the life of the Holy Family.

Where, one might ask, could Christians find a more perfect model, or one that is better adapted to the needs of their family life? In the home of Nazareth each one performed his duties, simply and faithfully. The days went by quiet and joyful in the presence of Christ and the peace of God. Christ was the center

of the home at Nazareth. All attention was to Him, every course and action motivated by Him. Not that there was anything much out of the ordinary; but just the same, everything was done through Him, with Him, and in Him unto the glory of the Father and the redemption of the world.

And this is the way it ought to be in every family; every one in it making his way homeward to God; father and mother being solicitous to form Christ in the souls of their children; and these in turn being, like Jesus, subject to the rule of their parents. For tomorrow, when they have become adults, like Jesus they too will find a work of redemption awaiting them.

Notes to Chapter Seven

[1] Eph. 5:32.

[2] It might be observed that the law of nature itself, as manifested to reason, declares the propagation of the race the primary end of marriage. —Translator's note.

[3] St. Augustine expresses this idea as follows: "Insofar as the City of God depends on the contribution of the human race, the union of man and wife is, so to speak, the nursery of that City" (*The City of God,* XVI,6).

[4] *Casti Connubii* ("On Christian Marriage"), Dec. 31, 1930.

[5] Matt. 19:6 (recalling Gen. 2:24).

[6] In his encyclical on marriage Pope Pius XI noted not only that marriage is a union of souls as well as bodies but that the former is prior and more intimate than the latter: "Conjugio igitur animi junguntur et coalescunt, hique *prius* et *arctius* quam corpora."

[7] Gen. 1:26.

[8] Gen. 2:18.

[9] Gen. 2:23.

[10] Cf. Eph. 5:25–32.

[11] Matt. 19:6.

[12] I Cor. 10:31.

[13] *Suppl.*,49,5. (N.B. The Supplement to the *Summa* was compiled after St. Thomas' death to complete the work he left unfinished.)

[14] I Cor. 7:3.

[15] I Cor. 7:5.

[16] I Cor. 7:4.

[17] Eph. 5:22,24–26.

[18] Matt. 5:48.

[19] The encyclical *Casti Connubii.* This encyclical stresses, among other things, the Church's teaching regarding the duty of man and wife to strive after personal holiness: "For matrimonial faith demands that husband and wife be joined in an especially holy and pure love, not as adulterers love each other, but as Christ loved the Church. This precept the Apostle laid down when he said: 'Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the Church,' which of a truth He embraced with a boundless love, not for the sake of His own advantage, but seeking only the good of His spouse."

The Pope further explains the love between man and wife as follows: "The love, then, of which we are speaking is not that based on the passing lust of the moment nor does it consist in pleasing words only, but in deep attachment of the heart which is expressed in action, since love is proved by deeds. This outward expression of love . . . must have its primary purpose that man and wife help each other day by day in forming and perfecting themselves in the interior life; so that through their partnership in life they may advance ever more and more in virtue, and above all that they may grow in true love towards God and their neighbor."

The Pope then proceeds to say that "this determined effort to perfect each other, can in a very real sense, as the Roman Catechism teaches, be said to be the *chief reason* and *purpose* of matrimony, provided matrimony be looked at, not in the restricted sense as instituted for the proper conception and education of the child, but more widely as the blending of life as a whole and the mutual interchange and sharing thereof" ("On Christian Marriage," New York: The American Press, 1936, p. 8).

[20] *Catechism of the Council of Trent,* Part. II, The Sacraments: Matrimony; McHugh and Callan, *op. cit.,* p. 345. See also the quotations from the encyclical *Casti Connubii* in note 19.

[21] Eph. 5:24–27.

[22] Eph. 5:24.

[23] Matt. 5:28.

[24] The traditional teaching distinguishes two ends in marriage: a) the *primary* end, namely, the procreation and education of children; b) the *secondary* end (or ends), such as mutual help, alleviation of concupiscence, etc. This teaching is affirmed both in Pius XI's encyclical on marriage and the Code of Canon Law. Thus the encyclical declares: "Among the blessings (*bona*) of marriage, the child holds the first place"; and the Code asserts: "The primary end of matrimony is the procreation and education of children" (Canon 1013,Par.1). Hence, the secondary ends are essentially subordinated to the primary end.

Regarding the primary end of offspring the Supplement to the *Summa* observes: "Offspring signifies not only the begetting of children, but also

their education, to which as its end is directed the entire communion of works that exists between man and wife as united in marriage, since parents naturally lay up for their children (cf. II Cor. 2:14); so that the offspring like a principal end includes another, as it were, secondary end" (*Suppl.* 49,2,ad 1m; Dom. Trans.).

A response of the Holy Office (*A.S.S.*,36,103; April 20, 1944) confirmed the classical teaching regarding the ends of marriage. The question was: "May one subscribe to the opinion of certain modern authors who deny that the principal end of marriage is the begetting and education of children, or who teach that the secondary ends are not essentially subordinated to the primary end, but are equally primary and independent?" The reply was: No.

[25] In the encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri* ("On the Christian Education of Youth"), Pope Pius XI described the purpose of Christian education as follows: "The proper and immediate end of Christian education is to cooperate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian, that is, to form Christ Himself in those regenerated by baptism, according to the emphatic expression of the Apostle: 'My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you' (Gal. 4:19). For the true Christian must live a supernatural life in Christ. . . . For precisely this reason, Christian education takes in the whole aggregate of human life, physical and spiritual, intellectual and moral, individual, domestic and social, not with a view of reducing it in any way, but in order to elevate, regulate and perfect it, in accordance with the example and teaching of Christ" ("Christian Education of Youth," Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1930, pp. 35-36).

[26] The author, apparently, has French Catholics in mind. Whether, *mutatis mutandis*, the same strictures can be laid at the door of American Catholics, the reader may decide for himself.—Translator's note.

[27] Cf. Matt. 11:12.
[28] Luke 2:14.
[29] I Cor. 13:12.
[30] Mark 12:30.
[31] Matt. 22:38.
[32] I John 4:20.
[33] John 13:35.
[34] I Tim. 2:15.
[35] Mark 6:2-3.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Holy Orders (I): *Priesthood in Christ*

SUMMARY:

I. The Priesthood and Kingship of Christ.
   1. Christ the Priest . . . 2. Christ the King.

II. The Priesthood and Kingship of the Church.
   1. The Priesthood of the Church.
      a. *The character indelible mark of the priest.*
      b. *The power to offer sacrifice.*
      c. *The power to sanctify.*
   2. The Kingship of the Church.
      a. *The magisterium.*
      b. *Spiritual government.*

III. The Priesthood of the Priest.
   1. The Priest in the Service of God . . . 2. The Priest in the Service of Men.

Holy orders is the sacrament by which men are constituted priests of Christ, that is, adorers of the Father and saviors of souls.

THE Word Incarnate holds a central place in the divine plan of the universe. Not only are all created and uncreated perfections combined in His own being, but His personal action and influence are all-embracing, extending to every being of the universe. God has placed the government of the world in the hands of Christ. Every act and effort of the world of angelic spirits, as well as every happening and event on earth, receives its first impulse and direction, and its ultimate control, from Him as the Supreme Ruler. He has power over all creation. God's own dominion is not more vast than Christ's. Nothing, neither good nor evil, ever happens except by His will or, in the case of evil, by His permission. Not a single atom of the universe and not a single human act but must submit itself to the all-inclusive and

all-powerful influence and direction of Christ. Our hearts may well be calm. Jesus watches over His Church and is directing all mankind toward the City of God.

I. THE PRIESTHOOD AND KINGSHIP OF CHRIST

It is through His priesthood and kingship that Jesus accomplishes His universal work of reconciling the world to God. As sovereign Priest He exercises a twofold mediation. He is, in the first place, always before the presence of the Father to give Him thanks, to make supplication to Him, and to tender Him on our behalf the worship and glorification that is due to His infinite majesty; but Jesus is also before the Father to obtain from the Trinity every grace and blessing that mankind needs. As King, He so guides and directs the Church through her relentless struggles against evil as to bring His elect to everlasting blessedness, to the possession of the eternally abiding vision of peace. His priesthood and His kingship work toward the same end, the one complementing the other. All things are at the service of Christ the sovereign Priest; and it is for the sake of fulfilling His office as Priest that He is King as well.

1. CHRIST THE PRIEST

The reason for Christ's priestly mission is basically the same as the reason for the incarnation. His priesthood is not an incidental privilege, but the most essential prerogative of the Word Incarnate. It is, in fact, the whole ground and reason both for His being always before the Father and at the same time among men. Christ, in other words, is priest not merely from this or that point of view, but by His whole self, by all He is and all He has. Of course, formally speaking, that is, from the standpoint of its proximate principle, His priesthood depends on His human nature and on His grace of headship, but its ultimate source lies in the hypostatic union.

The Epistle to the Hebrews has provided the Church with the classical doctrine on the priesthood of Christ. In this Epistle St. Paul, though not saying it in so many words, leaves no doubt that the divine sonship of Jesus is the ultimate foundation for His substantial priesthood, that is, for His being priest essentially, and not just in this or that respect.[1] It was not to Moses, nor to the angels, but to Christ alone that God the Father could say: "Thou art my son," [2] begotten from all eternity, Priest forever. We have, continues St. Paul, "a great high priest . . . Jesus the Son of God" [3] who is the "brightness of his glory and the image of his substance," [4] and, in the words of St. John, "the only-begotten of the Father," [5] through whom God created all ages, with whom He governs all creatures, the work of His hands. We have as Priest one of the three divine Persons of the Trinity. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," [6] in order to be the "one Mediator," [7] offering to the Father, in the name of all mankind now redeemed, the sole worship "in spirit and in truth," [8] the only worship henceforth pleasing to God.

The whole life of Christ was but a continual exercise of His priestly functions. Even on earth He possessed the beatific vision, and through this vision, though living among men, He was always before the presence of the Father, mediating before Him the affairs of our salvation and reconciling us with God by His prayer and infinite merits. The principal act of His priesthood, namely, the offering of the redemptive sacrifice, Jesus performed but once, on Calvary, but with such fullness of love and with such sovereign efficacy that by this "one offering" [9] He saved the world, thus by one stroke bringing His work of redemption to its highest consummation and "perfecting" all the redeemed in divine union. Whether we consider the infinite merits He gained, the satisfaction He made for all sins of the world (satisfaction that was not only adequate but superabundant), or the adoration and prayer and thanksgiving He offered—all this, in fact the whole activity of Christ's soul on the Cross, was invested with the priestly mode of a redemptive sacrifice.

Sacred Scripture sets forth God's plan for the world and the place that Christ was to occupy in it. We learn that by His eternal decree God willed a Christ that would be both Priest and Victim. The sacrifice of Calvary was the decisive act of His work of redemption; it was the inauguration of a new, a Christian cult. Possessing infinite value, this sacrifice needs not to be renewed, but simply to be perpetuated. The daily sacrifice of the Church, which is substantially identical with the immolation on the Cross, contains in the Eucharistic species the crucified Christ as He is always present before the Father to adore Him and to purify and sanctify men by His blood of redemption. Christ's sacrifice on the Cross was His principal act as Priest, but He also performed certain secondary acts pertaining to His priesthood. Thus, during His life on earth He forgave sins without the intermediary of a minister; He ordained His Apostles to the priesthood; He sanctified those who came to Him; and He preached the kingdom of heaven.

2. CHRIST THE KING

Besides His priesthood, the Word Incarnate possesses another prerogative, namely, that of universal kingship. Like His priesthood, Christ's kingship has its ultimate foundation in the hypostatic union and receives its divine character and excellence from this union. Christ is King, first of all, because like His Father and the Holy Spirit He is God, exercising the power of sovereign and creative dominion over all things, both visible and invisible. Furthermore, by the fullness of His grace of headship He is King as the incarnate Son of God. Again, He is King as Redeemer, that is, by right of triumph and conquest; and we know from Sacred Scripture that "of his kingdom there shall be no end." [10] Moreover, the Church teaches us that He possesses even temporal kingship, being the highest Lord and Master, the primordial Owner, of all goods and treasures of the universe.[11]

During His earthly life the Word Incarnate did not, as a rule

or in the customary manner, exercise His right of temporal dominion. He chose to devote all His efforts to the exercise of His spiritual kingship. His primary concern was to lead men to their eternal happiness in the City of God. As the liturgy of the feast of the Epiphany puts it: "He bestows the kingdom of heaven; He does not seize the kingdoms of men." [12] Jesus Himself expressly stated: "My kingdom is not from here." [13] He sought only the conquest of souls, so as to bring them to the Father's house, to eternal life in God. Hence, the kingship of Christ is ordained to the same end as His priesthood, namely, to the end of "perfecting" men in unity with His Father.[14]

II. THE PRIESTHOOD AND KINGSHIP OF THE CHURCH

Christ in glory, surrounded by His Church triumphant, is always before the Father, with access to God in His own right, since He is one of the three Persons of the Trinity. Though in heaven, Christ has not withdrawn from His Church militant to live inaccessible in eternity. Can anyone even for a moment believe that the Word Incarnate, having entered the splendors of heaven, would forget His redeemed on earth? Assuredly not. Faith teaches us that Christ in eternity is more than ever solicitous for His redeemed, unceasingly applying to them the infinite merits gained on the Cross and unerringly guiding them through the many struggles and daily crucifixions which His predestined must undergo as members of the Church militant, so as to come to the possession of eternally abiding and beatifying life in the Trinity.

1. THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE CHURCH

As already observed, Christ in glory continues to be Priest; He is Priest forever, always in the act of exercising His mediatory priesthood. It is in this Christ in heaven that the Church finds the

source of her own divine excellence, and the ultimate nature and meaning of the Christian priesthood. The Church, to be sure, knows from Holy Writ that there is only one Priest: Jesus Christ. She also knows that ever since the incarnation of the Word she possesses this one and only Priest of creation, the Son of God Himself. She knows that though in heaven, surrounded by His elect and always before the presence of God, He also continues to be ever present and active in His Church militant by means of the unceasing activity of His eternal priesthood.

The fact is that, having redeemed the world, risen from the dead, and ascended to heaven, Christ did not abandon the Church, that Church which now more than ever is His Church. Instead, He is with her every step of the way as she is born and grows among the nations, assisting her through His Spirit, bestowing on her the life of the Father, and sustaining her by the merits and the almighty power that are His as Christ, unceasingly living and active in her through His priesthood and kingship. Christ Himself, the one eternal Priest, is the principal offerer of the sacrifice of His Church. He is present in His Church and in our midst. He baptizes, He confirms, He joins in marriage, He ordains His priests, consecrates His bishops, anoints His dying, and sanctifies souls. All this He does through the sacramental action of His ministers. Through their instrumentality He continues to exercise, and is always in the act of exercising, efficaciously, His office as sole Mediator.

Furthermore, the government which the Church exercises over souls is itself always under the actual influence and direction of Christ's kingship. In order that the infinite merits of His blood of redemption might be applied to men until the end of time, Jesus endowed His Church with all the powers that were His as Christ, both with His sacrificing and sanctifying priesthood and with His kingship, to which has been committed the rule and direction of the People of God.

It would be a mistake to conceive of the kingly priesthood of the Church as something additional to the priesthood of Christ.

As the head and the members make one mystical body, so Christ and His Church are one. For the Church is none other than Christ, Christ continued and propagated across the centuries, in order to bring all men to the possession of life in the Trinity. There is but one sacrifice: that of Jesus Christ, made sacramentally present by the ministers of the Church. There is but one cult: that which is offered, whole and entire, through the intermediary of the priestly soul of Christ unto the glory of the Father and the redemption of the world. And there is but one Church and one life: that of the Blessed Trinity, pulsing through the total Christ.

Down through the long centuries of human history Christ has continued, and will continue, to be unceasingly engaged in the same work of salvation. "The Word was made flesh," [15] the only-begotten Son of the Father still dwells among us for but one reason: to give of His fullness, to bestow upon us the wonderful power of becoming, like Him and in His image, children of the same Father who is in heaven. It is from Christ's one and the same grace of headship that the Church receives both her divine life and the Christian priesthood.

In regard to the priesthood of the Church we shall briefly consider three points: a) the character: indelible mark of the priest; b) the power to offer sacrifice; c) the power to sanctify.

a) *The character: indelible mark of the priest.* The constitutive element of the Christian priesthood, that which makes it an abiding reality in the priest, is the sacramental character. It is this that imprints on the soul of the priest an indelible mark of configuration to Christ, thereby conferring on him all the priestly powers of the Word Incarnate. This fact of the sacramental character should be received with the same conviction, and be understood as possessing the same literal reality, that faith teaches us to accord to the other Christian mysteries. Thus, as on the one hand sanctifying grace transforms our very being together with all its powers to the point of making them Godlike and capable of sharing in the inmost life of the Blessed Trinity,

so on the other hand does the priestly character stamp the soul of the priest with the image of Christ the Priest to a degree and manner that renders his intellectual faculty a living and conscious instrument of Christ's priesthood. Not only does the priest become the instrument of Christ, but through him the whole Church is united in all the personal acts of worship and religion performed by the Word Incarnate. In virtue of his sacramental character the priest is another Christ, having the power to offer sacrifice and to sanctify souls. Each of his acts as priest is an act of Christ the Mediator.

b) *The power to offer sacrifice.* It is at the Mass that the spiritual power of the priest reaches its highest degree of efficacy and its supreme identification with Christ. Nothing on earth can begin to match the sublime greatness of the priest at the altar. At the moment when the priest, bowed over the bread and wine, pronounces as if in his own name the very words of Christ, "This is My body, this is the chalice of My blood"—at that moment the priest ceases to be merely himself and sacramentally becomes Christ. The mere man in him recedes. At the altar there remains then only the Word Incarnate in person offering Himself to His Father through His Church, by the same highest act of His priesthood that He performed on the Cross. At the words "This is My body, this is My blood," Jesus again offers Himself for the glory of the Father and the application of redemption to mankind. The chalice is truly His blood shed for many unto the remission of their sins. Each morning the priest of the Eucharistic sacrifice works the greatest of all miracles, next to that of the incarnation of the Word; each morning he makes Christ present on earth.

If, as we know, grace elevates the soul to the supernatural order, and if moreover this elevation constitutes a marvel that surpasses in excellence the creation of the whole universe, what shall we say of an action that perpetuates in the Church all the benefits of the incarnation and redemption? The consecrating action of the priest far outstrips in dignity all other works that

could be wrought by any creature, even as an instrument of God's almighty power, for its integral effect infinitely transcends the created order of being. Transubstantiation introduces us into the hypostatic order itself. It effects not only the real presence of Christ's human nature but by the principle of concomitance also the presence of His divine nature and Person, and the presence of each of the Persons of the Trinity, who are all inseparably and substantially present wherever Christ is present.

The sacramental action of the priest, we have said, brings about the presence of Christ. This presence is twofold, for Christ becomes present both as to sacrifice and as to His priesthood. The miracle of transubstantiation, which is the permanent possession of the Church, retains the Victim of Calvary unceasingly in the act of sacrifice: of sacrifice offered for the same purpose of glorification and redemption as the immolation on the Cross. The Mass, then, is the offering of Christ to the Trinity, an oblation whose power to glorify the Father and redeem souls is infinite. All the sublimity and greatness of the priest stems from this capability to make present on earth the crucified Christ of Golgotha, and thereby to perpetuate among men the unlimited efficacy of the sacrifice of the Cross.

It is through the sacramental character that Christ the Victim, Christ in sacrifice, becomes present; but it is also through the character that Christ becomes present as Priest. He becomes present in the state of performing the highest act of His priesthood, that is to say, in the act of offering up Himself, His own life, but this time and henceforth in an unbloody manner. In this mystery the basic principles underlying the sacramental order of being attain their maximum degree of symbolism and efficacy. The priest of the Church "re-presents" Christ the Priest and effects His sacramental presence as Supreme Pontiff. Christ thus becomes the principal minister, offering the same sacrifice as on the Cross. The minister at the altar speaks and acts "in the person of Christ Himself—*in persona Christi.*" By the mystery that substitutes Christ for the priest, the sacramental words effect

the real, though invisible, presence of Him whom the human minister represents. The role of the human priest is purely instrumental. Faith teaches us that behind the visible presence of the human representative, there is the eternal Priest, offering Himself to His Father in an act of perfect love, thereby endowing the whole body of Christian worship with infinite value, for He instills it with the personal sentiments of worship sent forth from His own soul, the soul that is His as Christ.

Besides acting in the name of Christ, the priest also acts in the name of the whole Church: *in persona totius Ecclesiae*.[16] In his prayers and in offering sacrifice, the priest addresses God in the name of the whole Church, being mediator for the Church before the sole Mediator. Nothing, as we have said, can compare with the sacrificial action of the priest that is performed in the name of Jesus Christ Himself. Truly this is a sublime function that the priest bears at the sacrifice: this function by which, at his pleasure, he can cause to be present on earth the Word Incarnate as Priest and Victim.

c) *The power to sanctify.* The Church has received from Christ not only the power to offer Him in sacrifice to His Father, a power conferred on her by the words "Do this in remembrance of Me," but she has also been empowered to give Him to souls through the administration of the sacraments. Thus, she has been commissioned to "go . . . and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." [17] Christ, moreover, gave her power to remit sins, saying: "Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." [18]

The priest is a man of God and of souls. Two ceremonies at the Mass clearly indicate this twofold aspect of the Christian priesthood. One is the action at the Consecration, when the priest raises the Victim of the sacrifice heavenward to God; the other is at Communion, when he approaches the faithful to give them an opportunity to partake of this same Victim. Such is the

twofold mediatory role of the priest in the Church: to offer Christ to the Trinity and to bring this same Christ to souls.

These two powers of the priest are complementary, though the one depends on the other. The power he has over the mystical body, which is secondary, is derived from the power he has over the real body of Christ, which is primary.[19] But it is one priesthood that has at its disposal both the head and the members. One might say it was only natural that the Word Incarnate should have chosen to put in the care of the same hands not only the soul that is Christ's, to offer it to His Father, but also the souls of His redeemed, to complete their union with Christ in the unity of the Father. As a matter of fact, the whole sacramental order is ordained to the sacrificial order. The priest, in other words, sanctifies souls only to offer them to God. Truly, it is the total Christ that God has committed to the priesthood.

This, then, is the grand perspective of the economy of grace as unfolded in God's plan for the world. It is by the mediatorship of Christ that the divine life of grace comes from the Trinity to the souls of men; and this life is disseminated through the entire Church by the hands of the priest. The human nature of Christ, substantially united with the Word, continues to be the principal and privileged instrument of the sanctifying life that is communicated to souls in virtue of the Word Incarnate's grace of headship. But Jesus willed to make use of other intermediaries as well, whose action would be subordinate to His mediatory activity. Thus He bestowed on other men the dignity of being sanctifiers of their brothers. Next to offering Christ to the Trinity in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, there is nothing in all the world that is more excellent and more sublime than to share in Christ's work of making souls divine by grace.

In this work of communicating to men the inmost life of the three divine Persons the priest, as we have said, is the instrument of Christ and of the Trinity. It is with the power of Christ and in the name of the Trinity that he speaks and acts when he administers the sacraments. When he baptizes, confirms, and

absolves, removing all trace of sin, it is always "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The priest becomes the immediate co-worker with Christ, being associated with Him in the most divine of all actions that the Trinity produces in the world, namely, in the redemption of souls. The priest is another Christ: *alter Christus,* being engaged with Him in the same work of salvation for the glory of the Father. Thanks to the priesthood, the Church is able to accomplish the highest of all missions entrusted to her by the Blessed Trinity, namely, the work of bringing the mystical body on earth to complete fulfillment and thus to convey the total Christ to the City of God.

2. THE KINGSHIP OF THE CHURCH

When one reflects on the various aspects of the mystery of Jesus' presence in His Church, one cannot but marvel at the manifold ways in which divine Wisdom has accommodated the redemption of Christ to the material and spiritual needs of human nature. Thus, the Saviour seeks to possess and to heal us, not in part but in our whole being, in body and soul. He follows us through the whole complex course of private and public life, at one time acting on us in secret and silence, at another time manifesting His will to the conscience of the Christian through the external authority of a visible hierarchy. While, in other words, the personal influence of Jesus Christ reaches to the inmost depths of the individual conscience, at the same time through His Church He governs and directs, publicly, the whole Christian world; even the temporal realm, the entire course and direction of nations as well as the souls of princes and kings, are, in the last analysis, under His control. All the events and happenings of this world, whether great or small, depend ultimately on the freely ordained decrees of His universal kingship. Everything is subject to Christ as to God.[3]

In the name of Christ the Church exercises among the nations of the world the twofold power of priesthood and kingship.

There is, however, a difference in the manner of exercise. In consecrating the host of the Mass and in administering the sacraments, that is to say, in communicating grace to men, the priest is an instrument, pure and simple, of Christ and the Trinity; whereas in exercising her participated power of rule over men the Church has a personal role to perform, for here she acts as a principal cause. Yet even here her every action is subordinate to Christ, so that in all things and in every respect the primacy of Christ may be upheld.

What this means is that in exercising her priesthood the Church recedes to the background, to make way for Christ, after the manner of a servant that is at the beck and call of his master; whereas in fulfilling her role of governing, the Church is like a queen. Nonetheless, Christ's sovereignty remains supreme and intact; His sovereign kingship is in no way compromised by the Church's lordship over men. What is not always sufficiently adverted to is that the rule of the Church over souls, a rule that is entirely spiritual, constitutes an auxiliary power to her priesthood, but a power that is necessary if the benefits and blessings of the priesthood are to be extended to all people everywhere. If the Church is queen among nations, and if in the name of her sovereign Lord and Master she governs nations as well as individuals, it is only to bring souls to share in the inmost life of God. In the Church, therefore, as in Christ, the kingship is at the service of the priesthood.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the Church of Christ should have this additional prerogative, the power of ruling over souls. Since the priesthood imposes on her the task of making men holy and divine by grace, she must be able to reach and follow them through the whole course of their Christian life, and to provide a suitable environment in which this life can grow and prosper. It would be to little avail to baptize the infant soul, if the Church did not have the further power effectively to direct it through all the dangers and pitfalls of human life so as to bring it safely to the City of God. Hence, like any perfect society,

the Church, by Christ's own will and conformable to the very nature of things, possesses the faculty to guide the minds of men and to direct their wills toward the common good of the Christian society. The Church, in other words, has the mission to instruct and govern men through the medium of institutions that are at once divine and human: divine by their supernatural origin, human as to the form and structure through which the divine institutions are adapted to the conditions in which Christians on earth must live out their human existence.

The Church exercises her kingship through the magisterium, that is, her teaching role, and through spiritual government. We shall give a brief account of each of these two functions.

a) *The magisterium.* As we have seen, it is the mission of the teaching and ruling Church to lead men to God. The primary task that falls to the Church in this respect consists in forming and training the minds of men. Of course, even her priesthood, as compared with her ruling power, already imposes on the Church the duty to transmit the divine truth to men. But this aspect of the magisterium relates more to the strictly spiritual teaching of the Church, to her teaching as it affects the interior and spiritual life of souls, for this task, too, is implied in her commission to bring to men the revelation of the mystery of God. Indeed, it is from the same mediating hands, from one and the same priest, that the faithful are to receive both the Christ of the altar and the Christ revealed in the gospel teaching. This, as a matter of fact, is the essence of the mediatory role of the priesthood, namely, to bring Christ to mankind, the Christ that will lead them to the Father so they may be made perfect in unity in God.

In addition to directing the interior life of souls, however, the kingship of Christ and the deputed kingship of the Church require that the minds of men be formed in regard to their public life as well, for only in this way will they be properly guided toward the establishment and possession of the same common

good in the social realm. It is difficult to lay down the exact provinces of these two orders of teaching, that is, of the spiritual life and the public life. In general, however, it is true to say that the teaching of the priest as priest is designed to direct souls in their quest of union with God through Christ, while the magisterium of the Church as compared with the priesthood is intended to instill men and their various institutions with those principles that must govern all efforts to build a Christian society in the light of the gospel.

In providing this sort of teaching and direction, the Church takes a large view of the needs, both material and spiritual, of human life. What the Church seeks above all is to establish the truth of Christ as the ruling influence of men's minds in every walk of life. Practically, this means that the province of the Church's magisterium is unlimited. For from the beginning of the Christian Era down through the centuries the Church's magisterium has influenced, directly or indirectly, the whole course of man's intellectual activity as it grew and developed from one generation to another. This active influence of the Church's teaching authority has penetrated every domain of human thought, making itself felt in the field of science, of art, of moral and political philosophy, and in the field of economic and social teaching. No matter how diverse the course of progress and development in these fields from one century to another, every advance and discovery can always be incorporated into the harmonious, organic philosophy of an authentic Christian humanism. Who would be so bold as to prescribe exact limits within which the normative direction of the Church's teaching may be legitimately exercised? Is it not true that in every field of cultural activity the human mind can find additional insights and inspiration from the light of Christ? We have it from Jesus Himself that the Spirit of truth is to be with the Church to the end of time,[21] guarding her against all error and establishing her in infallible truth. The Church is the repository of Christ's teaching,

and he who hears the Church walks not in darkness but has the "light of life." [22]

In short, through the magisterium the teaching Church, always and unerringly receptive to what she herself is taught from on high,[23] governs and directs, by the light of faith, the whole field of Christian thought as it seeks to further mankind's progress toward God by the guidance of His Spirit.

b) *Spiritual government.* When He was about to leave the world, Christ in His solemn farewell to the Apostles committed to them and their successors, that is to say, to His Church, a threefold power: the power to sanctify souls through baptism, to preach the mysteries of God to all nations, and to lead men to heaven by teaching them to observe the precepts of His gospel. In His own words, they were to teach "them to observe all that I have commanded you." [24] Sanctifying priesthood, doctrinal magisterium, ruling authority over all men in the name of Christ; in these three elements the whole mystery of the Church is summed up. The purpose of her spiritual mission is identical with the purpose of the incarnation and the redemption, namely, to build up the mystical body of Christ and to establish, more and still more, the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of the total Christ.

God endowed the government of the Church with the prerogatives that are necessary for every perfect society, with legislative, judicial, and executive power. Her activity, which is entirely supernatural, is a continuation of Christ's activity; through the medium of the temporal, it envisages only the eternal. As for the things of earth, none of them interest her for their own sake. Like that of Jesus, her kingdom "is not of this world." [25] Here, in this world, she has "no permanent city," [26] but awaits the everlasting blessedness of the City of God. Following the example of the Word Incarnate, the Church in all her actions deals only with the divine and eternal. The Spirit of God pervades all her legislation and all her administrative machinery down to the smallest detail.

Speaking of the visible structure of the Church, there are those who would be scandalized that she should have such a well-organized and highly developed juridical establishment. Perhaps one should ask them whether they are also scandalized that the Word took human form. Such people have never really understood the deeper meaning of the mystery of the Incarnation. By this mystery even the greatest of divine realities come to us in human form and feature. Was not Christ Himself a Palestinian, with all the external features of an Oriental? As He mingled with the crowd in Judea and Galilee, His appearance was not different from that of other men of Nazareth; but at the same time His Person, which is the Person of the Word, dwelled amid the ineffable presence of God, "in the bosom of the Father." [27] In like manner, the Church of Jesus pursues her work in the world in human cloak, but beneath it breathes the mystery of life that is altogether divine.

Like other societies, the Church has her laws, her temporal establishments and institutions, her officers of administration, and a visible head who imparts the one life of Christ to the whole body of bishops and priest and, through them, to all the faithful united with them. This head is the pope. By the power received from the Son of God, and in His name, he rallies the collective will of Christendom to the pursuance of the Church's highest good, which consists in communicating the holiness of Christ to the souls of men and bringing to the nations of the world the very life of the triune God. In the person of the pontiff of Rome rests the fullness of power, the power of sovereign priesthood, of infallible teaching authority, and of supreme rule over the entire Church. Yet by his own acknowledgment he is but the servant of the servants of God, *servus servorum Dei,* the vicar of Christ, and the representative of God. For the Church is not the pope alone or the bishops or the faithful. The Church is Christ Himself, Christ continued in the priesthood. It is the whole body of Christ. It is ourselves.

III. THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE PRIEST

In treating of the Christian priesthood so far, it was by design that we always related it to the mystery of Christ. For Christ and the priest are not a duality, but one. The priest is another Christ: *Sacerdos alter Christus.* The priest is Christ to all souls whom God puts on the road that leads to Him. The pastor is Christ to his parish; the bishop, Christ to his diocese; and the pope, Christ to the world. Every priest is truly another Christ.

1. THE PRIEST IN THE SERVICE OF GOD

The chief function of the priest is to offer Christ to the Trinity and to continue among men His unceasing presence as Victim, always about His Father's business [28] and mediating before Him the affairs of our salvation. It is in offering the Holy Sacrifice that the priest accomplishes the highest function of his priesthood. As we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in the things pertaining to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices." [29] As minister of the Christian cult, the priest every day offers Christ to God. On behalf of all mankind he offers to God the one Victim of praise and supplication, the Victim that gives infinite glory to the three divine Persons and obtains for all mankind, in proportion to the love and fervor prevailing in the Church, all the benefits of the redemption.

No other act of his priestly life gives the priest such power over God and men as this offering, in quiet and solemn manner, of sacrifice. At the altar the lowliest priest is on a par with the pope.[30] At that moment all the infinite riches and merits of Christ's grace of headship are at his disposal for the benefit of the entire mystical body. The modern world, which has fallen prey to the philosophy of activism—essentially this is the philosophy of secularism and pragmatism—the modern world, I say, finds it very difficult to comprehend this primordial meaning and

importance of the Catholic priesthood. It can understand and appreciate a priest spending himself for the terrestrial needs of man, but it overlooks God's claim to be unceasingly adored by men. At the Mass the priest, holding Christ in his hands, offers to the Blessed Trinity the worshipful expiation of the crucified Saviour, still immolated among men for the purpose of giving God the homage that all creation owes Him.

At the altar the priest stands in the place of Christ and in the place of the whole Church. When he pronounces the sacramental words of consecration that cause the Word Incarnate to be present on earth, he speaks and acts in the person of Christ Himself, and his whole concern is to be one with Christ so that he may unite himself with the praise and worship of the Word by which the Trinity receives infinite glory and all the graces of salvation are obtained for the world. Moreover, the priest also acts in the name of the entire Church. Through his mediatory voice the Spouse of Christ offers all her worship of praise and supplication. And we know that this voice is always heard, because in the eyes of God the prayer of the Church is merged and becomes one with the prayer of Christ Himself.

If we really understand the mediatory role of the priest at the altar, we shall also realize that at the hour of sacrifice, in this supreme function of offering Christ to His Father, the mediation of the priest attains a scope that is as vast as the economy of redemption. Nothing, either in heaven or on earth, falls beyond the spiritual focus of the priest at the altar. In union with the angels and saints of the Church triumphant he offers Christ in sacrifice for the glory of all the Trinity, for the relief of the souls in purgatory, and for the benefit of all members of the Church militant. Even the enemies of the Church are not excluded from the prayer of the priest. Like Christ on the Cross, what is there to prevent him from praying for all mankind? Is not the value of the Mass infinite? That is why the mediatory power of the priest extends to the entire Church, to the whole mystical body of Christ, being unlimited by time or space. It is only in the light

of eternity, however, that we can understand and appreciate this all-powerful, indeed this omnipotent, role of the priest at the altar.

The priest, also, makes it possible for all the faithful without exception, by uniting themselves with the holy sacrifice of the Mass, to make their own the offering of Christ to the Trinity, which is the essence of the Christian cult. It is a truly wonderful thing to see, even in the smallest hamlets and in the farthest missions of pagan lands, a simple priest surrounded by the faithful and offering to the God of the universe His own Son as Victim. Thanks to the priest at the Mass, every Christian can unite himself with the inmost thoughts and aspirations of the priestly soul of the Word Incarnate and thus participate, personally, in His same work of redeeming the world.

The unprecedented greatness of the Christian priesthood lies in its being essentially ordained to the offering, to the end of time, of the very sacrifice of the Cross, which is the highest act of Christ's own priesthood. Consequently, if there is nothing greater on earth than Jesus Christ, and if in Jesus Christ there is nothing greater than His sacrifice, by the same token there is nothing greater in the world than the priest at the altar, perpetuating among men all the benefits of the redemption.

To sum up, the mediatory role of the priest is twofold. He has the power not only to effect the presence of Christ on earth and to unite the whole Church with the Word Incarnate at the hour of the Holy Sacrifice, but he also secures for men the grace to share in the inmost life of God. In this way is brought about, by the ministry of the priest, the return of the total Christ to unity in the Trinity. In the last analysis, the mediatory action of the priest for the benefit of souls reduces itself to making them God-like by grace and transforming them in the very image of Christ. This is the whole substance of his twofold mediation: to offer sacrifice to God and to procure grace for men. Without this, the priesthood loses all meaning.

2. THE PRIEST IN THE SERVICE OF MEN

The priest, as we have said over and over, offers Christ to the Trinity. But he also forms the same Christ in the souls of men, so that the members in union with their head may constitute one living body of worshipers of the Father "in spirit and in truth."[31] Indeed, next to offering the Eucharistic sacrifice, the work of making souls Godlike by grace unto the praise and glory of the Trinity constitutes the highest function of the Church's priesthood. By this work the priest brings the very holiness of God into the life of men. Begun in baptism, the sanctifying activity of the priest in behalf of the soul continues all through the life of the Christian, that is, all through his earthly life of faith as a member of the Church militant. But we know that faith is only the beginning. Like the seed that is impelled by its every property to grow and develop, so does the life of faith seek the life of eternal vision. The daily crucifixions and mortifications of the Christian are to be so many stepping stones to this end. The role of the priest consists in helping him attain eternal life, in advancing him from the possession of the Trinity of baptism to the possession of the Trinity of glory. In short, the priest helps the Christian soul to journey to God in Christ.

As already indicated, it is in baptism that the Christian priesthood begins its mission to men. This first rite, however, which the priest performs over the child to make him a member of Christ is only the initial phase of the guardianship that the Church exercises over his soul in the name of the triune God. The Church has the further duty to foster the grace of God that she has planted in the soul of the child, to foster it as she would a divine treasure not her own but entrusted to her, to be made fruitful and productive. All the rights and duties of the Church, and therefore of the priesthood, stem from this first bestowal of grace. From now on it will be the mission and duty of the priest to see to it that this ingrafted life of grace produce its full effect on the whole being of the Christian, for it is to be the wellspring

of his every course of action both in private and public life. It is in the name of Christ that the Church assumes possession of souls; and in His name also she is to conduct them to the City of God.

It is the task of the priest, therefore, to form Christ [32] in the mind and will of the child, indeed in his whole being, wounded as it is by original sin and bearing the inheritance of a heavy burden of moral blemishes. His is the duty to direct this other Christ, this child, in accordance with the gospel of his Master, teaching him to be docile, in every course and conduct, to the promptings of Christ's Spirit. We cannot here give a detailed account of this work of the priest, for to do it justice one would have to retrace the whole history of the priesthood in the Church. Suffice it to say for the moment that one of the surprising joys of the state of vision will consist in being made to understand how Christ accomplished His work of sanctifying souls through the ministers of His redemption.

The fact is that there is not a single human act that lies beyond the supernatural influence which the priest must exercise over a Christian life. The priest watches over the Christian education of children. He forms the character of the militant workers of Christ who are officially designated by the Church to defend the faith. He reaches into the family to bless man and wife and to teach them the true meaning of connubial love, which is to grow into love in Christ. He sees to it that the consciences of all members of the family are formed according to Christian principles. He is the trusted friend of growing children, the counselor of parents, the help and support of adolescents in those critical years when their character assumes a definite and lasting pattern. And when the Christian falls, the priest is the Christ that pardons and brings him back to the path of duty and righteousness. He is, in fact, the companion of the Christian throughout his life, conducting him to God in the name of Christ. Every morning, in the consecrated Host, he provides souls with the opportunity to receive from God strength and inspira-

tion for their daily life. And at the end of life, when the Christian must leave a world that is already fading from his consciousness, the priest again approaches for one last deed of mercy. Vested with the power of his Lord and Master, he says, in effect: "You can depart, O Christian soul, in peace. The Christ of your baptism awaits, ready to give you eternal love and life in Him."

Through the priest, Christ still walks among men for the benefit of souls, imparting to them all the benefits of His redemption. Through the sacraments, Jesus Himself produces the divine life of grace in the souls of men. Through the teaching office of the priesthood, He enlightens them with His own light of understanding. Through the spiritual direction of the priest, He Himself conducts them to the highest degrees of Christian perfection. Wherever the Church is, wherever souls are saved, there is Christ with His priests, the ministers of His grace, of His word, of His power of headship. Without the priesthood Christianity should long ago have ceased to exist in the world. The priest is Christ sacramentally present on earth, continuing in invisible manner His mission as Saviour of men. Christ baptizes and absolves them; He nourishes their souls and protects their life in God.

The activity of the priesthood is as multitudinous as it is stupendous. It is through the priesthood that the Church guards the faith in the souls of men, through the priesthood that men are made to grow in the love and understanding of God, and through the priesthood that the law of Christ is brought to bear on the institutions and mores of nations. Whether we consider the parish clergy or the clergy of the religious life, the clergy almost consumed by their manifold activities or the clergy of study and scholarship, the contemplative clergy or the missionary clergy—nothing takes place in the Church without the priest. In one way or another, by one priest or another, all is done through the priesthood. The Church pursuing the conquest of nations for Christ is truly the living and abiding manifestation of Christ's own priesthood, of Christ still continuing among men His work

of redemption. Never must Christian thought succumb to misgiving or misjudgment on this capital point: that whatever their failings—yes, their sins—in the priests Christ still walks on earth, is still present among men. *Every* priest is another Christ: *Sacerdos alter Christus.*

Notes to Chapter Eight

[1] St. Thomas writes: "Although Christ was not priest insofar as He was God but inasmuch as He was man, nevertheless one and the same was both priest and God" (*S.T.*, III,22,3, ad 1m).

In regard to Christ's priesthood, Catholic theology makes this further classic distinction: namely, that the ultimate foundation of Christ's priesthood, its root, as it were (*radicaliter*), lies in the hypostatic union; but "formally" it is constituted by the grace of headship residing in the human nature of Christ. What is here said of His priesthood, also applies to His kingship (cf. *S.T.*, III,22,1,ad 3m).

[2] Heb. 1:15.

[3] Heb. 4:14.

[4] Heb. 1:3.

[5] John 1:14.

[6] John 1:14.

[7] I Tim. 2:5.

[8] John 4:23.

[9] Heb. 10:14.

[10] Luke 1:33.

[11] On this point Pius XI wrote as follows: "It would be a most infamous error to disavow that Christ as man has dominion over all matters whatsoever pertaining to public life; for from the Father He has received the most absolute right over all created things, so that all things have been placed under His authority" (encyclical *Quas Primas,* on Christ the King, Dec. 11, 1925).

[12] "Non eripit mortalia, Qui regna dat caelestia" (Vesper hymn, feast of the Epiphany).

[13] John 18:36.

[14] Cf. John 17:23.

[15] John 1:14.

[16] "In the Mass, that is, in the prayers, the priest speaks in the person of the Church. . . . But in the consecration of the sacrament he speaks

in the person of Christ, whose place he holds by the power of orders" (*S.T.*, III,82,7,ad 3m).

[17] Matt. 28:19.

[18] John 20:23.

[19] "The priest exercises a twofold action: the one, which is principal, over the true body of Christ; the other, which is secondary, over the mystical body of Christ. The latter depends on the former; but not conversely" (*Suppl.*, 36,2,ad 1m).

[20] "One may be considered the head of a multitude in two ways, namely, both as to interior influence and external government. It is in both ways that Christ is the head of the Church" (*S.T.*, III,8,7).

[21] Cf. John 14:26.

[22] John 8:12.

[23] The French reading at this point contrasts the "teaching Church" with the "taught Church" (*l'Église enseignante* with *l'Église enseignée*), a parallelism that resists exact transposition into English.—Translator's note.

[24] Matt. 28:20.

[25] John 18:36.

[26] Heb. 13:14.

[27] John 1:18.

[28] Cf. Luke 2:49.

[29] Heb. 5:1.

[30] "As regards this act (i.e., consecrating the body of Christ), no power is superior (i.e., to the power of the priest)" (*Suppl.*, 40,4,ad 2m).

[31] John 4:24.

[32] Cf. Gal. 4:19.

CHAPTER NINE

Holy Orders (II): *Fullness in Bishop and Pope*

SUMMARY: I. The Social Role of the Bishop.
1. Christ to His Diocese. . . . 2. The Fullness of the Priesthood. . . . 3. Guardian of the Faith. . . . 4. Spiritual Head. . . . 5. The Church in Miniature. . . . 6. The Cathedral.

II. The Pope.
1. Christ to the World. . . . 2. The Sovereign Pontiff. . . . 3. The Teacher of Nations. . . . 4. The Supreme Head of the Church. . . . 5. The Holy Father.

Bishop and pope are the perfect personification of Christ both Priest and King, the bishop being Christ to his diocese, the pope to the world.

I. THE SOCIAL ROLE OF THE BISHOP

THE bishop is the perfect personification of Christ the Priest and King; in him the priesthood attains its fullness in a way that is not true of the priest generally. The functions of the priest as priest and of the bishop as bishop are quite different. Thus, the principal function of the priest is to offer sacrifice, while his secondary mission is to sanctify souls so they may be united with Christ in the Eucharist, with Christ the Victim. By his priestly character he is essentially and immediately deputed to the work of divine worship. He is the man of the Eucharist; he is priest for God.

The bishop, on the other hand, is wholly and inherently dedicated to the work of governing the faithful in the spiritual realm. His consecration does not imprint a sacramental character on his

soul, but bestows on him the hierarchical power to rule as head.[1] While the priest is another Christ in His role as Adorer of the Father and Sanctifier of souls, the bishop is Christ in His role as Teacher and King, conducting the People of God to their eternal happiness. In the Christian community the bishop is in charge of the common good. He is the head.

I. CHRIST TO HIS DIOCESE

All the functions and powers of the bishop in the Church derive from the basic principle that he is the head and ruler of the Christian community. He is Christ to his diocese. In order that he might fulfill his office as shepherd of souls, the Son of God allotted to him, with superabundant liberality and fullness, all the powers of His priesthood and kingship. The head of his Church, the bishop sanctifies both priests and faithful by his power to confer orders, teaches the highest truths of Christianity even to those in perfect holiness, and defends the faith against all attacks from heresy and unbelief. By his laws and wise institutions he leads the Christian community to the City of God. To him falls the task of bringing everything in his Church to its perfect fulfillment.

As supreme shepherd of his diocese, the bishop leads his flock to the pastures of true life. Whereas political rulers direct human society to the achievement of temporal goods, the bishop exerts his every effort for eternal goods. In fulfilling his office he is Christ still going about among His people, preaching the kingdom of heaven to the multitude, weaning souls away from attachment to the treasures of earth, and bringing their attention to the highest commandment of the gospel, the law of love. He is Christ bringing back to the fold the wandering sheep, giving pardon to sinners. He is Christ ever solicitous for relieving all physical and moral evil, with anxious care for the sick and the dying, blessing and healing them all with His all-powerful goodness.

The bishop is also the living personification of Christ in His role as Founder of His Church[2]: the personification of Christ choosing the Apostles to be His co-workers in the redemption, ordaining them priests to perpetuate the sacrifice of the new, the Christian, cult and delegating to them His power to remit sins and save souls; of Christ commissioning the Apostles to teach all nations the divine truth and the obligation to observe His law; of Christ promising His co-workers in the redemption the assistance of His Spirit and His grace, and assuring them of his unfailing love and friendship. "No longer do I call you servants. . . . But I have called you friends." [3] The bishop surrounded by his priests is Christ in the midst of His Apostles, united with Him in the one work of salvation. With his priests and among his priests, the bishop fulfills the same office as Christ.

Let it be clearly understood that in speaking of the bishop as Christ we are not just drawing an analogy or an ingenious comparison between the thoughts and aspirations that should motivate the bishop in the performance of his functions and the thoughts and sentiments that animated the Son of God as He carried out His Father's mandate. We know from the teaching of faith that the episcopate touches at the very essence of Christianity, that the bishops, successors to the Apostles, come to us in the name and person of Christ Himself. In the bishops the Good Shepherd still watches over His flock; in them Jesus is still present among His redeemed, in fulfillment of His solemn promise to be with the Church to the end of time. The bishop continues on earth the Word Incarnate as Priest and King. He is the living perpetuation of Christ the Founder and Organizer of His Church. Wherever the bishop is, there is the Church; and there, also, is Christ. More than the priest, the bishop is Jesus acting in the souls of men and in the Christian community by the sovereign power of His priesthood and kingship. In his diocese, the bishop is truly another Christ.

2. THE FULLNESS OF THE PRIESTHOOD

God endowed the bishop with the fullness of the priesthood so that he might be the mediator for his people, with power to offer prayers and sacrifices in the name of God, and to obtain from the throne of heaven forgiveness for the sins of his faithful and bestowal of all the graces they need for salvation. Hence, in the life of the bishop, as in that of the priest, the culminating point, the supreme moment of his all-powerful mediation, is the Mass. Each morning he holds Christ aloft over his diocese, in homage of infinite adoration and supplication. Himself a weak and sinful man, with many personal failings and shortcomings, he approaches the holiness of God acutely conscious that he, too, has much to be forgiven. This daily contemplation and acknowledgment of his own unworthiness before his Creator reminds him to be merciful to the sinners among whom he dwells. He is father both to his priests and his faithful. His prayer and watchful love embrace them all.

As pontiff of his diocese he devotes himself daily to sustained meditative contemplation of Christ in order to find in the principal act of his priesthood, in the daily Mass, the strength to immolate himself for the redemption of his people; for, like his crucified Lord, he is to be not only king but priest and victim as well. Thus fortified, he is ready to go to his people to spend himself as head and ruler for their highest interests. In this capacity he makes use, first of all, of his power of orders. By this power he furthers the work of establishing and organizing the mystical body of Christ and directs the course of its journey to the City of God.

The bishop is the shepherd of his flock. Like the shepherd, he forms his Church, imprinting on each of his sheep the sign of Christ in confirmation. He also nourishes them and serves as their guide in all things. Even the administration of baptism falls under his jurisdiction. It is true, of course, that in extreme cases God permits not only any priest or Christian but any human

being with the use of reason to be the minister of baptism, so that the merciful effects of the incarnation and the redemption may be realized in such instances. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that in the primitive Church, at the time of St. Ignatius of Antioch, only the bishop—or, with his permission, the priest—administered the sacrament of Christian initiation, of incorporation into Christ and the life of the Church. To this day the bishop consecrates the holy oils that will be mixed with the baptismal waters—a clear indication of his sovereign dominion over all the baptized of his diocese. Priests themselves cannot validly exercise their power to forgive sins unless the bishop grants them jurisdiction over the flock of Christ. In short, the administration of all sacraments without exception comes under the over-all direction of the bishop.

The truth of the matter is that all the external activities of Catholic life and all the functions of the priest that have to do with the common spiritual good of the Church are subject to the authority of the bishop, the visible head of the Christian community. Certain sacraments, because of their being directly ordered to the common good of the Church, are administered by the bishop alone. To him as head in Christendom falls the task of establishing the army of soldiers of Christ and providing the higher and lower administrative officers by whom the militant workers of Christ are to be directed in all their activity. In this age of general apostasy the Church, under the impetus of the papacy, has at last recaptured the spirit of combat and conquest that is basic to Christianity. Through the Catholic Action movement Christians generally as well as the hierarchy have once more been made to realize that a spirit of aggressive action must penetrate the whole life of the Church on earth.

In the gospel Jesus Himself warns that only by heroic violence [4] can the kingdom of heaven be taken by storm. The Church on earth is essentially a militant Church, and every day for her is a day of combat. There are two sacraments that serve as recruiting instruments, providing the Church and the Christian society with

soldiers of Christ and with field officers to lead them into combat for God. These are confirmation and holy orders; and it is noteworthy that only the bishop, in his capacity as sovereign and head of Christ's army, administers them.[5]

We see, then, that the kingship of the bishop exercises a far-reaching directive influence. It not only governs the whole administration of the sacraments, but it regulates even the bishop's own power of orders in its social aspect, that is, insofar as this power is ordered to the common good of the Church. Accordingly, in his diocese it is the bishop who, ultimately, administers baptism, receiving human beings into membership in the mystical body of Christ and into the visible Church that he governs. It is the bishop, in the last analysis, who determines whether and when they are to be accepted for Holy Communion, who exercises over them the power of the keys which he possesses in fullness, and who, by confirmation, officially designates those who are to be the militant workers and soldiers of Christ, the defenders of the faith and of the common good of the Christian society. It is likewise the bishop who consecrates the oil of the sick, which is to be the means of purification for the dying. The bishop helps all Christians, whether directly through himself or indirectly through his priests, who are his co-workers, sharing his power to sanctify and to rule over souls. Even the power to offer the Holy Sacrifice comes under his jurisdiction, not as to its efficacy, which is caused by Christ alone, but as to its licitness. The bishop, moreover, blesses the liturgical vestments and consecrates the churches and the sacred vessels. In a word, the bishop possesses the fullness of the priesthood because he is the head and ruler.

3. GUARDIAN OF THE FAITH

In addition to his role as priest and pontiff, Christ entrusted a further mission to the bishop, one that flows from his power of orders. This is his office to be father to the faithful in matters of

faith, and guide in the conduct of their lives. Like Christ, the bishop is both priest and king. As priest he, like Christ the Priest, sanctifies souls. As king he, like Christ the King, conducts nations to God.

The bishop exercises his kingship both in the realm of thought and in the realm of government. By his twofold office as teacher and spiritual head he has the duty to conduct the mystical body of Christ to its true happiness. Indeed, no human being can reach the full development of his powers and personality without this twofold help from society, that is, without instruction and government. Thus, as the state has the duty to supervise the formation of the mind and, even more, the training of the will, so must the Church see to it that every member of Christ receives the necessary moral and intellectual development. Within the limits of his diocese it is the bishop's task to provide for the establishment and growth of all institutions required to accomplish this end. His first obligation in this respect is to form the minds of the faithful according to the teaching of Christ. As another Christ, he, too, must be a revealer of the Father and of the mysteries of God, teaching men the way to the kingdom of heaven, and showing them how to apply the principles of the gospel and the highest insights of religious thought to the practical situations of their daily life and conduct, even in the smallest details.

In this day and age the teaching mission of the episcopate is more important than ever. Ignorance in religious matters is the greatest evil afflicting the modern world, and this lack of truth continues to be the source of its ills and catastrophes. Untold numbers of people are sitting "in darkness and the shadow of death," [6] waiting in vain for someone to show them the light of Christ that alone can save them. This is the role of the Church, the missionary of truth; and it constitutes both one of the prerogatives and one of the major duties of the episcopacy.

The task of teaching religious truth can be approached in two ways. One consists in setting forth the Catholic truth, the other in defending it. In every age the primary approach to this work

of forming the Christian mind and character should be the positive one, through comprehensive and constructive exposition of the teaching of faith. This is the more important in a world like ours that abounds in contradictory philosophies almost without number, for in such an atmosphere the solid armor of sound doctrine is the greatest intellectual safeguard of salvation for the Christian, and not infrequently it is his only support. Today more than ever the conscience of the Christian has to be firmly grounded in convictions of faith that have been thoroughly reasoned through and thus will not be shaken by any and every wind of contrary doctrine. Furthermore, it is a matter of daily experience that nothing is better calculated to bring men to accept the light of the gospel than a direct and integral presentation of the teachings of Christ.

This gigantic task of teaching Christ's truth to the world is beyond the capacity of any one man. Hence the bishop will enlist and direct the help of others. He will have recourse to catechists, to educators from every level of education, to various organizations set up to secure the doctrinal formation of those who are to be the elite among the militant workers of Christ. He will call upon Christian leaders in every field, whether they be theologians, philosophers, scientists, or artists. He will, in fact, appeal for help and co-operation from all who, by the spoken or written word or in any other capacity, can help to spread Christian thought and influence. In this matter of teaching the truth of Christ to the world, the ground that still remains to be explored and penetrated is truly immense. The task that faces the Church is not simply one of preserving, in timid and cautious fashion, the integrity of the faith among the faithful; it is above all the task of going forth boldly and fearlessly, as of old, and once again conquering all minds to the truth of Christ. "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" [7] exclaimed St. Paul. Here, in one word, the Apostle announced to all bishops their program for evangelizing the world.

The positive work of setting forth the teaching of Christ is not enough. As already remarked, in a world that is beset by a

host of false philosophies and pseudoreligions, the bishop must also defend the faith. In this respect, the particular aims to be achieved will vary from one age or place to another. Ours happens to be a civilization that is basically unstable and unsettled, marked as it is by a never-ending succession of the most diverse cultural and intellectual movements; and the same can be said of economic and social trends. No sooner is one born than another arises to succeed it. Each diocese will have its special problems in regard to particular doctrinal matters. For the faith produces different reactions according as it is embodied in this or that culture or presented to this or that people. Often these reactions are influenced by the broader national and international movements of a political or social nature. We cannot remain aloof from all these problems and movements. In this age of unprecedented communication facilities the trends of one part of the globe soon come to be known and reckoned with in every other part. In every diocese it is the bishop's care to discover the needs and dangers facing his people.

Here again, in defending the faith, the bishop is not alone. His clergy are associated with him in the same task, spreading and defending the truth and forming the minds of Christians. With the bishop they share the same responsibilities and the same triumphs, for triumphs they are. Indeed, when it comes to defending the faith, the intervention of the episcopate has been decisive time and again throughout the centuries of the Church, as is clearly attested by the history of heresy and doctrinal controversy. The great names of Athanasius, of Cyril of Alexandria, of Ambrose and Augustine, of John Chrysostom and many others, what are they but so many living memories of the bishop's role in the Church as father and teacher of the faith?

4. SPIRITUAL HEAD

Every society needs someone to be its head. In the Church the head is the bishop. As the representative of Christ, it is his

mission to conduct men to their last end, to the kingdom of God. For this purpose the Word Incarnate bestowed on him the fullness of His own powers as Priest and King. Through the doctrinal direction of the bishop's teaching authority the gospel of Christ is to become the ruling principle of men's minds; and, in fact, whole civilizations have sprung up with the Christian ideal as their distinguishing mark.

As the spiritual head of the diocese, the bishop has at his disposal all the powers of headship. His legislative, judicial, and executive powers provide him with a wide variety of effective means for directing men to their eternal happiness. It is his function to translate Christian principles into practice, to apply them to every sphere of action within the area of his jurisdiction. This includes not only souls individually, but the family and social groups as well. By God's will a vast sector of the economy of redemption has fallen to his care, to be borne with earnest zeal. Christians, on their part, owe him filial obedience and active cooperation. As for non-Christians and the temporal powers of the realm, even they are under obligation to facilitate his supernatural activity and to subordinate their own actions to his spiritual power; for this power, wielded in the name of Christ, is as far-reaching as that of the Church itself. In the exercise of his pastoral office the bishop is subject to none but the pope, the supreme head of the Catholic world.

His mission of spiritual headship imposes on the bishop the most formidable responsibilities. He has the obligation to promote, actively and effectively, the common good of the Christian society, sparing no means or efforts at his command. He will establish judicious customs and institutions. Wherever circumstances or conditions require it, he will be prompt to act or intervene. In making laws he should be prudent but resolute, and when he imposes a command it should be clear and decisive. Sometimes he may have to take measures that are extreme but necessary to ensure the autonomy or authority of his Church. So vast is the scope of his spiritual headship that he would be a bold

individual, indeed, who presumed to mark off the precise limits of the bishop's legitimate activity.

Hence, it is not for us to set off the boundaries of a jurisdiction that was established to be exercised throughout the whole domain encompassed by the redemption. But we can lay it down as a general principle that the bishop, guided by the special virtue of prudence required in rulers, must direct the whole spiritual organization of his diocese both as it affects the Church in itself and in its relations with the established powers of the realm. And he must do this in such wise as to bring about that Christian social environment which is absolutely necessary to safeguard the faith of his people. After all, they too are but weak human beings, easily influenced by their surroundings. Thus, he will direct every sphere of activity, that of the individual, of the family, and of the social group. His direction must extend to every course and every level of action, either in amicable relation with the temporal powers or, as the case may be, in strong reaction to their encroachments. The bishop must be ever vigilant and ready to act. Like a good shepherd, he knows that left to itself his flock will often be surrounded by and at the mercy of wolves. All this, of course, calls for effort and strength that goes beyond the ordinary capacity of men. But the bishop knows that he can count on the almighty power of Christ.

5. THE CHURCH IN MINIATURE

The diocese is the Church in miniature, a Church on the open march to God, with all the problems and difficulties that the Church militant as a whole meets with as she pursues her work among nations. Its spiritual head, the bishop, has his vision fixed on the blessedness that is everlasting. His sole desire is to lead his people to the City of God. His faith opens up to him the perspectives of eternal happiness. Through the understanding vouchsafed him by divine Wisdom, he beholds, in its harmonious unity, the heavenly Jerusalem in which his particular Church is

to take its place among the living stones by which the eternal City of God is built up. This anticipated vision of the one Church of Christ enthroned in the splendors of glory furnishes him the motive and inspiration for his every deed and course of action, both great and small. He knows that his mission is to guide and govern souls in the name of Christ.

As priest, the bishop offers souls to Christ and, through Him, to the Trinity. Pontiff and head of the Christian cult, he must see to it that all members of Christ have ready access to the sacraments, so that through them they may receive every grace of the incarnation and the redemption and thus be united with the divine life of their Saviour. As teacher of the faith, he explains to the faithful the revelation of the mystery of God, pointing out to them the paths of the gospel by which alone both individuals and nations can attain the divine happiness of the hereafter. Acting in conformity with the special virtue of prudence required in him as ruler and head, he assigns each of his Christians to his post of combat in the Church militant, and determines for all the particular way in which they are to cooperate in the work of saving their brethern.

Through his clear-sighted and firm rule, moreover, he will strengthen the weak, correct the faults and mistakes of his subjects, and move all wills to work for God's triumph. In moments of crisis, when hope of human deliverance fades, one refuge will never fail him: the promises of Jesus to His Apostles. Faith will give him the absolute assurance that the Lord Jesus is always present in the midst of His Church, making up for the weaknesses and shortcomings of His human ministers. He will know that Jesus Himself acts on the inmost being of the members of His mystical body, bringing unfailing help to His redeemed when threatened by the dangers of this world, and protecting them day and night with the all-powerful prayer pouring forth, unceasingly, from the soul that is His as Christ. "Father," He beseeches, "I do not pray that thou take them out of the world, but that thou keep them from evil." [8]

On their part, the faithful, united in their priests and their bishop, know that from on high the Good Shepherd watches over the salvation of their souls, and that He will abide in the midst of His Church to the end of time.

6. THE CATHEDRAL

As on the one hand the person of the bishop is the complete and living representation of the mystery of the Church, so on the other hand is the cathedral the symbol of the life of the Christian community. This church of stone in which the bishop presides over the assembled faithful is to be a reminder of the Church invisible, which is altogether spiritual and made up of God-fearing men and women who love Christ and, with Him, through Him, and in Him, live in the unity of the Trinity. This external temple carries our thought and attention upward to the heavenly Jerusalem that is not built of human hands and in which we are to be living stones, upward to the eternal City whither all our desires and all our yearnings incline, where, together with the angels and in union with Christ, we shall praise forever the infinite glory of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, all the material elements and appointments serving our faith, even the most ordinary and commonplace, are so many signs that should stir us to contemplation of the highest divine realities.

The pontiff celebrating the Holy Sacrifice at the altar is Christ still present and offering Himself in His Church in order to perpetuate before His Father's presence and among His redeemed, His own personal worship as the Word Incarnate. With the sentiments of worship and adoration that He offers as the only-begotten Son of the Father, He unites the praise and adoration of all the children of God.

It is also in the cathedral that the bishop, by baptism and confirmation, builds up the Church of God on earth, making it ready for combat for Christ. It is in the cathedral that he confers

upon the newly ordained priests both the power of the priesthood and the mission to save souls, thus continuing in them the personal redemptive action of the Word Incarnate. The very "chair" of the cathedral bears witness to his office as father and teacher of the faith. From it he addresses the faithful as father of his children, expounding to them with simplicity and thorough understanding the mysteries of the God revealed in the gospel. In the cathedral, moreover, the head of the diocese promulgates the synodal decrees which are to govern the life of his people, supplying all with their instructions for action in the Church as she pursues her work of bearing witness to Christ among the nations.

The cathedral, in fact, recapitulates the whole life of the bishop and of the Christian community centered around him. Situated in the see city, often in the heart of it, and open to all men, the cathedral is a standing affirmation of the catholicity of the Church of Christ. To the faithful, who can there take part in the same sacrifice every day, it is a living symbol of their unity in Christ and their communion with the saints in heaven, already in full possession of eternal life in the all-adorable and beatifying Trinity. Lastly, this edifice of stone, which continues to exist, retaining its identity as pastor succeeds pastor and fortune follows fortune, this edifice is a vivid reminder of the immutable and perpetual duration of the Church, in whom the real presence of her living Christ will abide until the end of time.

II. THE POPE

At the summit of the hierarchy of the Church stands the pope, the vicar on earth of Jesus Christ and the representative of God.

1. CHRIST TO THE WORLD

"Wherever Peter is, Christ is—*Ubi Petrus, ibi Christus.*" Peter is Christ—Christ ever present in the Church to offer her to His Father, ever present to sanctify and enlighten her, and to

bring her victorious through the trials and tribulations of this life to the eternal City of God. Never does the pope take his stand in his own name. Always he acts and speaks in the name and person of Christ Himself. He is pontiff, teacher, and king, deriving his priesthood and kingship from the fullness of grace of the Word Incarnate, the supreme head of the Church. As priest he is the instrument of Christ. As teacher and king he is guided by the Spirit of Jesus in all things pertaining to his teaching authority and ruling power. Every word and deed of the pope is a continuation of Christ acting in His Church. Jesus Himself gave Peter the solemn assurance, in Galilee, that "whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." [9] God ratifies in heaven whatever Peter decrees in His name on earth. The Son of God committed to him, unreservedly, all His own powers of redemption.

The Catholic teaching on the position of the pope is clear-cut. No man of good will can believe the inane exaggeration that we hold the pope impeccable in his private life, or infallible in every administrative detail of his government. But the history of the Church, which covers a span of nearly twenty centuries, and, above all, the assurances of our faith are a sufficient guarantee that Jesus is continuously present in the midst of His redeemed, exercising His watchful care over them, that He Himself is conducting them to their eternal destiny, making up for the limitations of His ministers by the almighty power that is His as Christ and assisting the pope in his apostolic work among nations. St. Catherine of Siena, echoing the intuition of her deep faith, liked to refer to the pope familiarly as "the gentle Christ on earth." She spoke the literal truth. The entire theology of the papacy is contained in principle in the classical expression: that the pope is Christ to the whole world.

2. THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFF

Undoubtedly, what strikes us, even at first glance, about the official character of the pope is the note of sovereignty in his

priesthood. He is the supreme mediator on earth between men and God. He offers the Holy Sacrifice for the entire Church and sanctifies souls by imparting to them, through the sacraments, the grace of Christ. For the pope, as for every priest, the principal act of his priesthood consists in offering Christ to His Father.

It is true, of course, that in offering the Eucharistic Sacrifice the pope does not possess any power that is superior to what every other priest possesses, since no power in the world surpasses that of the priest at the altar. But what a "psychological" difference, we might say, between the offering of the Holy Sacrifice by a simple priest and the offering of this same sacrifice by a pope! When his priestly hands raise Christ aloft over the world, the pope is one with Christ as at no other moment of his life, and his worshipful prayer embraces the whole Church, for the whole Church is in his care. Through Christ, with Him, and in Him, he offers up the entire Church, united with her Head in His own sacrifice: a sacrifice of expiation and adoration, of thanksgiving and supplication, containing in substance the whole Christian cult and worship. In the life of the pope as in that of every priest in the world, the Mass is the highest moment of his identification with Christ and of his union with God.

As already said, in offering the Holy Sacrifice the pope, the head of the whole Church, is on the same footing as every other priest; however, he surpasses them all by his power of orders, which extends to every member of Christ's mystical body without exception. Furthermore, his universal jurisdiction as supreme pontiff is intended to be an instrumental aid to his mediatory power of sanctification, even as Christ's kingship subserves His priesthood. The functions of the pope are as comprehensive as those of Christ. His is the function to incorporate all men as living members into the life of the Word Incarnate and to constitute them soldiers of Christ; his the function to bless the union of man and wife that is contracted with a view to founding a family; his the function to wash away in the blood of Jesus all the sins committed in this world, and at the hour of death to re-

move the last vestiges of sin that could prevent the Christian soul from realizing its earnest desire to be with God; his the function, also, to ordain priests, to designate the temples and places of worship, and to consecrate the members of the hierarchy in every rank, placing them as heads over their several Christian communities. In short, the sovereign pontiff performs in the Church all the priestly functions of Christ.

3. THE TEACHER OF NATIONS

Like Christ, the pope is priest, teacher, and king. As priest it is his unremitting care to be ever mindful of God and to give Him glory. As priest, also, he is entrusted with the care of souls, specifically with the work of bringing to them the divine life of grace. As teacher and king he must endeavor to establish the reign of Christ over every mind and will, over all nations and their various laws and institutions. There is not a soul on earth that is not the object of solicitous care on the part of the supreme pastor of the Church, charged as he is with leading all men to God.

As teacher of the faith, he proclaims the gospel to the nations. The need and importance of this work is paramount. For man has been raised to the supernatural order; hence he must not only be guided by reason but he must also know, and adhere to, God by faith. All creation, in fact, was established for the greater glory of the triune God, who is the God of the gospel. This is not the abstract God of philosophers and scholars, remote and aloof from the world, abiding inaccessible in His own being. On the contrary, the God of the gospel is the God of love who became man to save us, the Good Shepherd who came among us to find the sheep that had been lost. The Creed of the Roman Church proclaims that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who predestined His intelligent creatures for a life of intimate fellowship with Him in the unity of the three divine Persons. On earth man must walk by faith, dimly. But grace is destined to reach its full

term in glory, where man shall live eternally in God, sharing His life of thought and love, united in the divine joy and gladness of the adorable Trinity. Such is the exalted and sublime perspective of the Christian universe, such the great light that the papacy shines on the world.

It is worth noting that all the great thinkers of the world, even after many centuries of collective endeavor, were never able to gain the least insight into the central truth of revealed faith, namely, that the inmost life and thought of God consists in the mystery of the generation of the Word, and that men are destined to share in this life. Hence, the smallest child who knows his catechism has more understanding and certainty about every one of the most fundamental truths of revealed religion than the greatest genius ever came by. In order to appreciate the inestimable benefits of the magisterium of the Church, we have only to compare the teachings of the papacy, with which Christian nations are blessed, with the twaddling notions about God and the meaning and purpose of life that are current among people yet deprived of the light of the gospel, sitting as they do in darkness and the shadow of death.

It would be a very dangerous mistake to minimize the importance and extent of the teaching mission of the Church, which is the messenger of revelation to the nations. We make this mistake when we restrict the magisterium to the infallible, that is, the so-called ex cathedra definitions regarding faith and morals. The teaching authority of the Church goes much further. It extends to the uttermost reaches that human thought can attain by the light of faith. The unfailing assistance of the Spirit which Jesus promised His Church is to be understood as applying, directly or indirectly, to all the diverse and devious efforts of the human mind in its groping search for the light of truth. Hence, in addition to the solemn declarations of the Roman pontiffs and the great encyclicals addressed to the universal Church, the Holy See issues, in one form or another, a great number of other directives. Not all of these carry the same weight

in terms of official pronouncement or authorization, but basically all bear the stamp of the Church's teaching authority.

Thus, from the Holy See comes the approval or rejection of the conclusions reached by general and particular councils, the decisions of the Roman Congregations, the letters to the bishops, the various censures and secret admonitions, the letters of commendation, the general and particular norms to be followed by exegetes, theologians, philosophers, and other Christian thinkers and scholars. It is the Holy See that issues the directions and orders given to Catholic universities, the instructions forwarded to every realm of Christian education, the consistorial allocutions, as well as the more informal and extemporary remarks of the pope. Also to be reckoned among the directives of the Holy See are the preferences it manifests for this or that scientific view or system, deeming it more in accord with the data of revelation. Through these various means, by His infinite wisdom, the Spirit of God brings the Church of Christ to the fullness of truth.

As we remarked when speaking of the role of the bishop, the teaching mission of the Church imposes a twofold task. The first and most important one consists in systematically expounding the truths of Christianity; the second is the work of defending the faith. For the exposition of her teaching and the application of it to practical life, the Church makes use of all branches of human learning, calling upon the help of all her teachers. Within the framework of a common faith, all are permitted the greatest freedom of research and the fullest use of the data of revelation. Nowhere in the world is there to be found a greater diversity of creative genius than among the great Catholic saints and scholars. St. Augustine, Origen, St. Jerome, St. Bernard, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. John of the Cross, Dante, Bossuet, Pascal —all these and many more found full scope of expression for their talent within the background of a common Christian culture. And this is not surprising, for within the setting of Christian thought every form of culture and civilization can find ample room for expression. In fact, by definition the work of system-

atizing and synthesizing the teachings of Christianity is never finished—which is simply the price of possessing truths that are inexhaustible.

As in times gone by, so in the centuries to come, the Church of Jesus Christ will continue to disseminate her teaching among the diverse nations of the world, bringing with it elements of culture and civilization which, while assuming different forms of external expression according to time and place, are ever new and always authentically Christian. The gospel contains in principle all the diverse cultural forms in which Christianity is destined to be embodied in the generations to come. The truth is that the Church of God is always in the process of building a new world order. Consequently, instead of looking upon the body of Christian truths already developed from the teaching of Christ as a vast cathedral whose structural lines have been set once and for all, it were better, perhaps, to consider Catholic theology as something that is perpetually in the process of being formed and hammered out. Doubtless, the truths which the gospel brings to men of every generation are eternal, but in every age they need to be related and applied, practicably and under the guidance of the Church, to the problems of the age. In fact, it is an essential mark of the Church's catholicity that she can adapt herself to every age and to every intellectual environment. Both the work of systematizing her teaching and the work of developing her doctrine as occasion requires, are always going forward. Thus, while in the realm of speculative theology the efforts of theologians tend more and more to building up a harmonious synthesis of Christian dogmas around the central mystery of the Trinity, under the impetus of world economic conditions the so-called social teaching of the Church is undergoing enormous developments on every side.

Furthermore, in its efforts to acquire a true understanding of the temporal needs and conditions of the Christian society, the hierarchy of the Church seeks the active cooperation of the lay apostles in Catholic Action movements. One of the essential tasks

incumbent on the Church in consequence of the magisterium is precisely that of importuning all members everywhere to seek earnestly to acquire an ever more comprehensive, and more precise, understanding of Catholic teaching and its practical bearing on the lives of all. It is hardly necessary to emphasize the great needs as well as the great scope of such effort, and the countless benefits it holds out.

The Church has ever been true to the teaching mission entrusted to her by Jesus. Always she has gone forth, teaching all nations. And what was true in the past is even more true in recent times. Witness, for example, the truly imposing variety of pontifical documents and instructions of the past century. Leo XIII, Pius X, Pius XI, Pius XII, all these great names bring to mind the masterful encyclicals and the invaluable directives in which they dealt with the urgent problems that have occupied, and still occupy, the attention of the modern world in every domain of life and worship. From them we have most important documents on the teaching of the Eucharist, on Mariology, on individual and family morality, on problems having to do with education, with the spiritual life, and with culture generally, as well as documents on economic and social questions. From them, also, we have pronouncements on international problems, reminding rulers and subjects alike of the basic principles that must underlie the peace and justice of the world. No one who has ever given the matter a moment's attention can fail to marvel at the great power and effectiveness with which the gospel can be brought to practical bearing on every aspect of life.

As previously mentioned, parallel to the positive work of teaching and expounding is the task of defending the faith and Catholic institutions generally. This aspect of the Church's teaching mission covers as wide a field as the positive aspect; it touches on every phase of intellectual endeavor. In an age like ours that is characterized by the growing apostasy of nations, the importance of defending the faith should be obvious to all. For this work the pope, even more than in other matters, appeals for the help and

cooperation of all his people. Both for the exposition and the defense of the Christian faith the Church seeks to mobilize all the sciences and all the arts, bringing them into service for Christ.

In this effort, moreover, the Church is divinely guided. For we know that our Lord prayed that the faith of Peter should not fail. We know, too, that the voice of the pope is the voice of Christ. This is a benign voice. Far from reducing the minds of men to abject enslavement, the teaching authority of the Church directs them prudently and wisely along the path of truth. In brief, the pope is God's great light of understanding to mankind.

4. THE SUPREME HEAD OF THE CHURCH

The teaching authority of the pope represents only one aspect of the divine mission enjoined on the Church by her Founder. This mission, we know, consists in leading all men to eternal happiness. In studying the mystery of the Church, therefore, one must be prepared to take the large view, for its true measure is found in God Himself. We must have the supernatural vision to see the Church as coming forth from the splendors of the life of the Trinity, in which she has her origin "in the bosom of the Father." [10] We must see her as unfolding in heaven as on earth, reaching full growth in the countless multitude of the children of God, all of them united with the only-begotten Son of the Father as members of one body with their head. The Church is simply the total Christ journeying to the City of God.

Over this multitude, Christ has placed a head, the pope, who is His vicar and representative on earth. Like Christ, therefore, the pope is also king. The spiritual kingship which he bears over individuals and nations places the Church on a divine level, above all human societies. For the Church is supernatural both by her mission and destiny and by her Founder, the God Incarnate; her mystery is beyond the grasp of mere human understanding. Only faith can give us access to the inmost being of the Church, since her mystery is none other than the mystery of

Christ Himself. In the Church, therefore, we find both the grandeurs and the frailties that are authentic elements of the true mystery of the Incarnation.

Like her Lord, the Church is both human and divine, both visible and invisible, composed of weak and mortal men, who for the most part are but poor sinners. Yet she possesses all the necessary means to make these same men Godlike by grace. Though in many ways joining her efforts with those of the powers of the world, she yet transcends them all by her higher mission. She alone is inherently and solely concerned with bringing men to their last end, to the vision of God. Everything in her, both her inner being and her external activity, is ordered to this sublime end, namely, the salvation of souls and the increase of holiness. All other societies are subordinated to this final end and, consequently, to the Church of Christ.

We do not mean to say, of course, that the Church takes the form of an absolute theocracy that would suppress all legitimate rule and autonomy of temporal powers in the temporal order. Caesar's power suffers no encroachments from the Tiara—but Caesar must be obedient to God. In other words, every action by the temporal powers that affects, directly or indirectly, the higher, supernatural interests of souls is subject to the authority of the spiritual kingship of the Church. The pope, moreover, wields all his power of kingship in the name of Christ. He has legislative, executive, judicial, and coercive power; for the Church, a perfect society, must have all the necessary means to bring about the full realization of the common good of a society vast as hers, a common good that is both material and spiritual, both temporal and eternal.

In every society, it may be noted, the common good is secured through the establishment and maintenance of peace. The tranquillity of the social order in which the peace of a nation consists, comes about when the diverse interests, needs, and pursuits of all groups within a nation are brought into perfect agreement; that is, when industry, commerce, labor, agriculture, science and art,

and the various branches of public administration, work together in harmonious accord. The common good, however, is not just the sum total of individual goods. It is a higher good of the social order; it is a synthesis of all the goods of man, a synthesis in which all his legitimate aspirations are satisfied.

What is true of the common good generally is also true in the Church. Thus, if the common good of the Church were perfectly realized, it would bring about the tranquillity of order that constitutes the peace of Christendom. Each individual would put his personal gifts and abilities at the service of the community; each family and each nation would permit every other family and nation the full benefit of its own cultural and other resources, as well as the benefits of its special attainments resulting from its national and social genius. There would be a spirit of fraternal association and mutual assistance in every field of endeavor, in the economic, the intellectual, and the artistic domain, as well as in the realm of moral and spiritual achievement. Everything would be at the service, and for the benefit, not only of the followers of Christ but of all men. All this would come to pass if, I say, the common good of the Church were perfectly achieved.

But the modern world, alas!, presents us with quite another picture. The head of the Church is confronted with every obstacle in his work. He is constantly impelled to bring matters to a head in his relentless efforts to establish and maintain the kingdom of Christ both in the souls of men and in their various customs and institutions. The people themselves, diverted by their rulers from their common and true destiny, are as sheep that are lost, wandering aimlessly. Yet, through it all, the successor to Peter, the vicar of Christ, continues his role as supreme shepherd. By day and night, from the heights of the Vatican, he watches over the salvation of the world. He continues the work of Christ—and Christ, did He not commit all nations to his care?

It should be stressed that the pope's sovereign primacy extends to nations as well as to individuals. Nothing lies outside his jurisdiction, not only in the realm of the spiritual but even in the

temporal and material realm whenever and wherever the interests of the redemption are at stake. We know how solicitous the Church always has been to bring about both the temporal and the eternal welfare of her children. She seeks to minister to the bodily needs of man in order to facilitate the work of saving their souls. She dispenses the resources of the world with a view to building up the kingdom of God. The only concern of the kingly rule of the Church, who is in the world but not of it, is to make men holy. Whatever power the pope has and exercises, all his legislative, judicial, and coercive power, and the numerous administrative machinery at his disposal—all this exists and is employed for but one purpose: to create a social order in which the ideal of holiness can prosper, that is, to bring about on earth the full growth and development of the Christian way of life.

This is the ultimate meaning and purpose of every course of action conceived and pursued by the papacy in cooperation with the episcopate and, so far as possible, with the temporal powers. The kingship of the pope, as we have stated again and again, is the kingship of Christ. The pope's rule and power is sovereign in every sense of the word. It is not without significance that the tiara bears a triple crown. The pope is responsible for the salvation of the whole world. To him falls the task of directing all hearts and minds, all nations and rulers, to God. True Christ on earth, the pope keeps his vision steadfastly focussed on the holy, the immutable, and the beatifying Trinity. Whatever the vicissitudes of time and fortune in the Church, his every effort knows but one purpose: to lead all men to the City of God.

5. THE HOLY FATHER

The Christian instinct very soon found a happy and familiar epithet to convey its deep insight into the mystery embodied in the head of the Church. It is the word "papa," which derives from ancient popular Latin. For us, it is "Holy Father." In the eyes of men generally, the pope is regarded as the father of all;

and in truth he is the most palpable personification on earth of the fatherhood of God.

All the powers of the pope bear the stamp of his role as father. His priesthood gives birth to supernatural life in the soul. His kingship governs the family of God. His supreme mission consists in building up the total Christ in the world by incorporating men in the Word Incarnate and helping them to become, by grace, children of God. Thus, the deeper meaning of the sovereign rule of the Roman pontiff lies in his role of spiritual fatherhood. Every one of his manifold activities in the role of Christ on earth is impregnated with this paternal quality. In a word, the action of the pope is productive of life.

As priest, in baptism the pope brings forth men to life in God. By confirmation he furthers their growth in this life, whose terminal point is to be nothing less than perfect resemblance to and conformation with Christ. Each day, in the name of the Father in heaven, he distributes for the benefit of all Christians the true Bread of Life. His blessing is on every home, whose mission it is to increase and multiply the children of God. In the sacraments of penance and extreme unction he snatches souls from spiritual death, restoring them, in the measure of their fervor and love, to full spiritual and, it may be, even physical health. Lastly, through his own sovereign priesthood he raises up priests and bishops, who are foremost in the Church as propagators of supernatural life.

Furthermore, the pope does not abandon men once he has brought them forth to life in Christ. By his spiritual kingship he continues to guide them, so that the divine life in their souls may come to full growth. Through his teaching authority he directs the minds of men by the light of the Word, along the path of truth. The laws that he enacts as head of the Church are designed to bring every action of the Christian into conformity with God's will. To repeat what we have more than once said, there is not a single human act that is not subject to the rule of Christ's law, of which the pope is the authentic interpreter. If,

at times, punishment must be meted out, the pope always conducts himself as a father who is more concerned with correcting than punishing his children. To sum it all up, if the Church is our mother, the pope is our father, the father on earth of the family of God.

Notes on Chapter Nine

[1] This is not the place to launch a discussion as to what constitutes the essential element of the episcopacy. For our part, we take our stand in the matter on the teaching of St. Thomas; for it seems to us that his teaching on the episcopacy is both more penetrating than some others and more conformable to the hierarchical constitution of the Church. We also believe it is more fruitful of practical applications with regard to the social role of the bishop in the life of the Christian community generally, and in particular as the head of Catholic Action movements.

Thus, according to St. Thomas, in the Church the bishop has the hierarchical role of head, being, so to speak, a prince in the Church: *est quasi princeps in Ecclesia* (*S.T.*, III,65,3,ad 2m). The episcopacy adds to the presbyteral priesthood (that is, to the simple priesthood) the power of headship over the mystical body: "The bishop receives power to act on Christ's behalf upon His mystical body, that is, upon the Church; but the priest receives no such power in his consecration, although he may have it by commission from the bishop. Consequently, all such things as do not belong to the ordering of the mystical body are not reserved to the bishop, such as the consecration of this sacrament. But it belongs to the bishop to deliver, not only to the people, but likewise to priests, such things as serve them in the fulfilment of their respective duties. And because the blessing of the chrism, and of the holy oil, and of the oil of the sick, and other consecrated things, such as altars, churches, vestments, and sacred vessels, makes such things fit for use in performing the sacraments which belong to the priestly duty, therefore such consecrations are reserved to the bishop as head of the whole ecclesiastical order" (*S.T.*, III,82,1,ad 2m; Dom. Trans.). In the Supplement to the *Summa* we find this comparison: "The episcopal power stands in the same relation to the power of the lower orders, as political science, which seeks the common good, to the lower arts and sciences, which seek some particular good" (38,1).

Doubtless, the presbyteral priesthood also possesses a certain power of orders and sanctification in regard to the mystical body of Christ, but

only inchoatively, as it were, and in a manner that is imperfect and incomplete: "A priest does not have fullness of power in the hierarchical offices, as a bishop has—*non habet completam potestatem*" (*Suppl.*, 38,1,ad 5m).

The specific (as opposed to generic) difference, then, is that to the presbyteral priesthood the episcopacy adds the hierarchical power of headship. Only the bishop possesses the fullness of the priesthood and the power of rulership over the mystical body of Christ, a power, moreover, that is hierarchically dependent on the pope, whose episcopal power extends over the whole Church.

[2] Cf. *Suppl.*, 40,4,ad 3m.

[3] John 15:15.

[4] Cf. Matt. 11:12.

[5] It might be noted that on September 14, 1946, the Sacred Congregation on the Discipline of the Sacraments issued a decree empowering pastors and certain other priests in an equivalent office to confer the sacrament of confirmation on persons in grave danger of death from a serious illness, provided certain conditions are fulfilled. For text, translation, and commentary see Francis J. Connell, C.SS.R., "The Recent Decree Empowering Priests to Confirm," Washington, D.C., 1947 (reprint from *American Ecclesiastical Review,* 1947).—Translator's note.

[6] Luke 1:79.

[7] I Cor. 9:16.

[8] John 17:15.

[9] Matt. 16:19.

[10] John 1:18.

CHAPTER TEN

Holy Orders (III): *Source and Pattern of Priestly Spirituality*

SUMMARY: I. The Priesthood and Union with Christ.
1. Oneness with Christ the Mediator. . . . 2. Oneness with the Expiation of Christ. . . . 3. Oneness with the Adoration in Christ's Soul. . . . 4. Oneness with the Thanksgiving of Christ. . . . 5. Oneness with the Prayer of Christ. . . . 6. Oneness with Christ the Saviour. . . . 7. Oneness with Christ the Teacher. . . . 8. Oneness with Christ the King. . . . 9. The Priest Is Another Christ.

II. The Priesthood and Union with Mary.
1. The Priest and the Mother of Christ. . . . 2. Offering Christ with Mary. . . . 3. Saving Souls with Mary. . . . 4. The Priest of Mary.

III. The One Eternal Priest.

The priestly ideal of holiness is to live as another Christ the Mediator, in union with Mary the Mediatress.

I. THE PRIESTHOOD AND UNION WITH CHRIST

IN THE true and integral conception of the Christian priesthood lie the principles for a complete doctrine of the spiritual life specifically applicable to priests. In attempting to formulate this doctrine one has to recall that, though the teachings of morality have their foundation in the teachings of dogma, it is moral science that makes the application of dogma to the field of morality. Hence, in order to get at the principle that is basic to any doctrine of spirituality for the priesthood, we have simply to

translate the theory of instrumental causality from the realm of dogma to the realm of morality and the spiritual life. Thus, as the instrument of Christ, the priest must strive to be one with all the thoughts and sentiments of the principal Priest whose place he holds. Another Christ in power, the priest should also be such in soul, in heart and mind. He is to live as another Christ. *Vivat ut alter Christus.* This was the profound admonition of Pius XI in his encyclical on the priesthood.[1] To live as another Christ—that, in one word, sums up the complete ideal of holiness incumbent on the priest.

I. ONENESS WITH CHRIST THE MEDIATOR

When we say that the priest, acting in the person of Christ, should be one with all the thoughts and sentiments that motivate the mediating soul of Christ, we have come to the heart, to the central point, as regards the mystical theology of the priesthood. As an instrument endowed with intellect and will, the priest must put all his intellectual and moral resources at the service of his role as Christ. By the very nature of things, a servant is expected to act conformable to the intentions of his master; which is to say that in all things the priest should be one with his Master, Christ. For, to repeat, by the special grace that God imparts to the priest on the day of his ordination, he becomes another Christ: Christ as Priest and Victim; and throughout life this grace continues to be at his disposal for the worthy exercise of his sacred ministry.

It is of the utmost importance to have a true understanding of the special grace that the priest receives. Every effort to arrive at a doctrine of spiritual perfection that applies specifically to priests must begin with this grace as the determining principle. In other words, what needs to be remembered is that the grace proper to the sacrament of orders differs from the grace and the effects that are proper to the sacraments of baptism and confirmation.

The grace of baptism, for example, is one that incorporates us with Christ. By it man is conformed to the image of Christ, becoming a living member of the Word Incarnate. He is given the status of a son before God. Christ becomes his expiation, his redemption, his prayer, his adoration, in a word, the source and exemplary cause of his holiness. Christ becomes his all in the supernatural order. All this he has in and through Christ. Baptism introduces him into the inmost life of the Trinity and makes him a child of God, bearing the resemblance of the only-begotten Son. In this sense, every Christian is another Christ: *Christianus alter Christus.*

Confirmation, on the other hand, imparts to the soul the fullness of the Spirit of Jesus. Its purpose is to complete the resemblance and conformation of the Christian with the Word Incarnate. It conforms the soul to Christ specifically in His role as the warrior of God and the witness to the world of His Father in heaven, a role sealed by His martyrdom on the Cross.

When it comes to the sacrament of orders, we find still another specific effect. This sacrament stamps the priest with the image of Christ the Priest, Teacher, and King. It makes the priest another Christ the Mediator, charged with the task of bringing God to men and effecting their elevation in God. Baptism gives us the soul of a child of God, and confirmation the soul of a soldier of Christ, while holy orders gives the priest the soul of a mediator and ruler.[2] For the sacrament of orders, much more than some others, is a social sacrament, as it were, and has a social and corporate import as vast as the economy of redemption. The work of every priest, from the highest to the lowest, affects the whole mystical body of Christ. Through the hands of the priest all the blood of redemption continues to be shed for the salvation of the world. Father Olier used to say that to be a priest means to carry the burden of the whole world on one's back. It is the task of the priest to make men divine by grace and to elevate the whole universe to God. For this purpose the grace of the sacrament conforms his soul to the soul of Christ the Mediator, Pontiff, and King.

It should be clear, then, that priestly spirituality is essentially the spirituality of a mediator.[3] The priest fills the same office in the world as Christ, Mediator par excellence between heaven and earth. The priest in the Church is a living Jesus Christ; he is Jesus Christ in the cloak of a man. Hence, the priest who seeks to be faithful to the grace of his priesthood by every action and impulse of his soul will seek to be ever more united and one with all the thoughts and sentiments dwelling in the mediating soul of Christ.

2. ONENESS WITH THE EXPIATION OF CHRIST

If there is one thing that stands out most in the religious history of mankind, it is the fact of sin, sin in all of its ramifications. The principal motive for the incarnation of the Son of God was to offer reparation for the infinite offense committed against God through sin. The paramount importance of expiation in the present dispensation of Providence is clearly shown in the prophetic thought that was uppermost in the mind of Christ when coming into the world. As St. Paul has it, quoting Psalm 39: "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou has fitted to me. . . . Then said I, 'Behold, I come.' "[4] Christ dedicated His whole life to the task of expiation. To be one with Him, therefore, the priest also must offer himself as victim with Christ. Is he not Christ's other self, another Christ? Each morning at his Mass, which is the principal act of his mediation, he should take upon himself the burden of all the crimes and misdeeds of men. In every parish, not to say in the whole world, there is so much to expiate, so much to offer reparation for. At the hour of the Mass the priest is another crucified Christ, standing before the altar with arms outstretched, crossways, over mankind. He stands between heaven and earth to obtain pardon and mercy, being another, a new Christ, a universal mediator responsible for the whole world.

One can hardly overestimate the value of these precious moments of the Mass, or the positive influence they exert on the

priest's growth in holiness. These are the most fruitful minutes of his daily life, since then at least, for one brief interval of the day, if not more, his soul becomes like the soul of Christ crucified. In the Mass the perspectives of his ministry assume new dimensions. Forgotten are the acts of meanness and opposition with which he is confronted every day. Viewed against the vast background of the redemption, human events and happenings are appraised in the light of eternity.

Consequently, the priest who understands his role at the Mass will not run the risk of allowing himself to be carried along by the easy manner in which the world dismisses sin; for the modern world has lost all sense of sin, committing it with an air of indifference, if not amusement—as though sin were not the unique source of all the evils of mankind. When the priest has become one with Christ at the altar, he will come away with the indomitable resolution to make men acutely aware of the gravity of sin, which is the only evil that rends the heart of God. Indeed, the presence of unpunished sin in a world that came forth from His hands is intolerable to God. Hence, the priest will do all in his power to make his fellow men, his brothers, realize the full malice of sin, calling their attention, in season and out, to its most tragic result in history: the spectacle of God dying on the Cross.

The hatred of sin, moreover, which is one of the highest acts of divine charity, will help the priest himself to avoid every occasion of it. Thus it will help him mightily to achieve the negative condition of all holiness, namely, the absolute avoidance of all evil. Furthermore, this daily experience of becoming one and inseparable with Christ in His struggle against sin and in His reparation for it, will serve to develop in the priest himself the spirit of sacrifice. This is the spirit that makes for heroic men and saints.

3. ONENESS WITH THE ADORATION IN CHRIST'S SOUL

Adoration is the imperative response of the soul to the grandeur and majesty of God; it is, in a way, the very essence of the

virtue of religion. The redeeming death of Christ on the Cross demonstrated as nothing else could the necessity of proclaiming the absolute rights of God and acknowledging His infinite transcendence over all creatures. In the sacramental sacrifice of the altar, in which the same signs of Christ's death are enacted—namely, the sacramental separation of His body and blood—in this sacrifice Christ through His priests continues to offer to His Father the homage of unceasing adoration and worship. The perpetual adoration from the heart of Christ still living and present in His Church, constitutes the highest act of our profession of faith in the infinite grandeur of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the beginning and the end of all things.

United with the mediatory homage of the soul of Christ, the priest at the altar worships and adores in the name of the Church, in the name of all men and all creatures, and in the name of that worship in spirit and truth which the Father expects of us all. The mission of the priest to offer adoration in the name of Christ is like an invisible heart and center from which and through which passes every act of true worship offered by men to God. Through all the tumult and turmoil of the modern world, scarcely anyone takes the time to think of this contemplative and prayerful aspect of the life of the Church on earth. Every morning as darkness recedes and dawn approaches, the Church militant, before resuming her daily relentless struggle in the world, makes it a practice to recollect herself for a while so as to be united with the adoration offered from the soul of her Christ. Thus strengthened and sustained by the crucified Christ, the Church under the guidance of her priests then goes forth among the nations to gain them all for Christ.

From his complete identification with the contemplation and adoration of the soul of Christ, the soul of the priest can derive benefits that are truly immense. If he is faithful to this first work of his daily life, he will avoid the terrible danger of activism, that is, the condition in which activity is endless, but lacking in the substance of the interior life. All of his apostolic labors will be

patterned on a genuine scale of values. The priest who meditates and contemplates knows that one minute of prayerful worship does more good for the Church and the world than all the activity expended by men on the affairs of men. The ceaseless course of the whole universe, awe-inspiring though it be, brings less glory to God than the smallest act of pure and perfect love unperceived by men. The priest who is true to his office, who each morning in the name of the Church fulfills his role as adorer of the Father, becoming one and inseparable with Christ, this priest will be certain to maintain, throughout his ministry, the awareness and appreciation of the primacy of God. Though his priestly apostolate may be overburdened with an endless variety and succession of duties, he will never lose sight of the supernatural motivation that should underlie it all. The great French saint and national hero, Joan of Arc, summed it up, charmingly yet uncompromisingly, in this succinct phrase: "Milord God, my first allegiance."

4. ONENESS WITH THE THANKSGIVING OF CHRIST

A further mediatory function of the priestly soul of Christ consists in giving thanks to God on behalf of all creatures of the universe. "Father, I give thee thanks." [5] These words of Jesus bear witness to an essential element of His mediation. Every benefaction calls for thanksgiving, and never more so than when the benefactor is God. The holy sacrifice of the Mass is, among other things, the homage of thanksgiving which the Word Incarnate is always in the act of offering, so that in the Mass His thanksgiving, or more correctly, He Himself whom we offer, becomes our thanksgiving.

From the mediatory soul of Christ in the Eucharist is poured out such fullness of thanksgiving and acknowledgment as not merely to compensate for, but to infinitely exceed, all the ingratitude of men toward God. In the beatific vision Jesus sees all the material and spiritual benefits that God in His sovereign

goodness has willed to bestow upon every being of the universe, from the beginning to the end of the world, in every order of being: in the order of nature, of grace, and glory. Foremost among these blessings are Christ's own hypostatic union and the infinite fullness of His grace of headship. High among these gifts also must be counted His own Church, His angels and saints, His absolute dominion over every creature in heaven, on earth, and in hell; and not the least of them, the gift to the world of His own Mother, who was endowed with such purity of life and such power and holiness as to be a worthy Mother of God. For all these blessings and benefits, Jesus offers infinite gratitude to His Father.

In the name of the Church the priest at the altar offers to the Father, in homage of praise and glory, the same thanksgiving that is offered by His own Son. Every day at the Mass he fulfills the role of official mediator of all the gratitude and thanksgiving offered to God through the Son. In this role, as in others, lies the source of the greatest personal holiness for the priest. His soul, one with that of Christ, becomes the vehicle of expression for the thanksgiving that redeemed mankind offers for all graces gained through the incarnation, graces that are unceasingly vouchsafed to men for their every need. For one it may be the grace of purity or the grace of perfect union with God. For souls enslaved to sin and evil, it may be the grace of sudden conversion or, perhaps, the grace of gradual emancipation. At other times it may be a special grace of understanding or the grace to persevere in doing good. There are the many graces granted to all virgins, all confessors, all martyrs, and all saints. There are many other graces of every kind which the merciful Trinity never ceases to grant, not only to men and women in the Church but to every human being of good will who in his misery turns to God in prayer. Thanksgiving for all these graces is offered to God through the priest at the altar.

Thus, the soul of the priest is to be mediator for the divine consolations bestowed upon afflicted mankind. For the worthy

fulfillment of this office of universal mediation the priest will know that his own soul must make every effort to unite itself, through and through, with the homage of infinite gratitude that is offered from the soul of Christ. Transported in spirit to the heart of Christ to be merged in the boundless abyss of gratitude of the Son toward His Father, the priest surpasses his mere human capacities to a degree that cannot be calculated, since in Christ his soul has access to God Himself. In these moments of the Mass, conscious as never before or after of the boundless gifts of God, he will want to raise his voice in unceasing mediation of thanksgiving, seeking by day and night—if only he could—to praise God for His mercies. Indeed, the soul of a priest that has become one with the soul of Christ is no longer a slave to the ephemeral joys of earth.

The priest, then, is the mediator in the Church of the thanksgiving that creation owes to God. As he fulfills this office at the Mass, he will find his soul encouraged to adopt that attitude of fearless and filial trust in God which it must have to acquire holiness; and in so doing he will inspire others to have the same trust and confidence. Whatever difficulties he may face, he will know that in heaven he has a God who is a Father more loving and kind than any other. He knows also that by uniting himself in his daily Mass with the inmost thoughts and sentiments of Jesus toward His Father, he, too, can approach God with the soul of a loving and thankful son.

5. ONENESS WITH THE PRAYER OF CHRIST

In the present phase of the economy of redemption, prayer plays a part that is of primary importance. Prayer, in fact, is the decisive factor in the application of all merits gained by Christ on the Cross twenty centuries ago. In other words, with His death the Word Incarnate finished His work of meriting. Now, from His throne in heaven, He has only to communicate to succeeding generations the fruits of His suffering and death. Jesus no longer

needs to merit and expiate for us. Instead, He is unceasingly before the presence of the Father, always living to make intercession for us.[6] Day and night He beseeches His Father to grant, in view of the merits of His redemption, to the Church militant and to all mankind whatever graces they need for their salvation. The Mass itself, besides being a sacrifice of propitiation, adoration, and thanksgiving, is also a sacrifice of prayer and supplication; indeed, it is the prayer of Christ Himself.

The whole Church on earth joins in the supplication that Christ offers in the Mass, knowing full well that the prayers of mankind are not heard unless they become part and parcel of Christ's own prayer. As a matter of fact, the entire function of the priest at the altar consists in offering to God the prayer of Christ in the name of the Church. Since the Father, as we know, always hears His beloved Son, the primary purpose of the priesthood is to retain Christ in prayer before His Father and to make Him present among men, so that the voice of the Church, united with the prayer of the Son, will find in the Son a power of supplication that is irresistible. To be sure, the priest counts it a blessing that he can approach the altar with his own prayers and those of the entire Church; but what he seeks most of all is that his own prayer should be lost completely in the personal prayer of Christ, like the drop of water in the wine of the chalice of redemption. Thus, there is to be but one suppliant and one prayer, as boundless and unceasing as that of the total Christ in prayer. The more the Church loses herself in Christ, and the more the visible, secondary minister becomes one with the invisible, principal Minister, in short, the more that prayer is one with Christ's prayer, the better its chance to be heeded and heard by God.

Each day the Mass provides the priest with the opportunity for intimate converse with the soul of Christ in prayer. This daily experience is yet another and a truly wonderful means of his own sanctification. For then his prayer is identical with the prayer of Christ, whose unceasing intercession in heaven for us

is not a mere gesture devoid of meaning and reality, but on the contrary an earnest and intense prayer, even as was His prayer on earth. St. Paul's description of the prayer of Jesus reveals it as accentuated by a deeply moving tone laden with pathos, not to say tragedy. The prayer at Gethsemane and Golgotha was a manifestation of the whole drama of redemption that took place in the soul of Jesus. According to St. Paul, it was a veritable cry of redemption, accompanied by tears [7] and, as the gospel has it, by blood.[8]

At the altar, therefore, the priest should experience in his heart something analogous to the agony of redemption that rent the heart of Jesus. For, in his daily priestly ministry he will come in contact with the multitudinous evils, both physical and moral, that prevail on every side. Often he will feel helpless to do anything. In such a pass the faithful priest instinctively seeks refuge and support in the mediatory and all-powerful soul of Christ, whose work of redemption he has been appointed to continue among men in the name of Christ. Eager to help Christ save the world, he also will be in agony with Him, often keeping late vigil in the night and thus prolonging in the mystical body the mystery of the prayer of Gethsemane.

A soul that knows how to pray is well on the way to holiness. If this is true generally, how much more is it true of the soul of a priest who knows how to pray! Adequate words cannot be found to portray his power and influence. The whole Church receives of his holiness. When such a priest is at prayer, the whole world is brought closer to God. Thus the priest who each day unites himself completely with the priestly and mediatory soul of Christ is truly another Christ seeking the Father's glory, and another Christ-Saviour to the entire Church.

6. ONENESS WITH CHRIST THE SAVIOUR

The grace of the sacrament of orders conforms the soul of the priest to the soul of Christ as Adorer of the Father; but beyond

that, it serves to produce in his soul the same habitual sentiments toward redeemed mankind that motivated the soul of Christ as Redeemer. These two phases of the redemption go together, namely, the glorification of the Father and the sanctification of souls. The Word Incarnate, who by His grace of headship is unceasingly reconciling mankind to God, also gives men the power to share God's life by grace and to live in intimate fellowship with the Blessed Trinity. The priest, on his part, exercises the same office of mediator in the Church. He continues on earth the work of glorification and redemption which the Word Incarnate came into the world to accomplish. Hence, he should fulfill his role as mediator in the same spirit as Christ, that is, with the soul, with the heart and mind, of a Christ.

Nevertheless, the priest, conscious as he may be that his office is to fulfill the work of redemption in the name of Christ, is even more aware that in the presence of the one eternal Priest he himself must recede. In other words, he knows that though the words are spoken by him, they are the words of Christ Himself, and that through him it is Christ that still baptizes, absolves, confirms, consecrates—in short, that it is Christ that still administers in an invisible manner all the sacraments of His Church. Consequently, in seeking, as he should, the highest perfection of his priesthood, the priest does not need special recipes or formulas of holiness, especially such as are not expressive of his state of life. Christ acts in and through him. Therefore, he will best further his union with God by acquiring the habit of uniting himself with Christ in every act of his priestly ministrations. When he baptizes, absolves, consecrates, dispenses the Bread of Life, in fact, whenever he exercises his power of orders, he performs an act of Christ. Let him perform his every action with the soul of a Christ, that is, as Christ would perform it; let him unite himself completely with the same will and desire that is ever uppermost in the soul of the Word Incarnate in heaven as it was while yet on earth, namely, with the will and desire to

glorify the Father and fulfill the redemption; let him do this, and he will reach the summit of holiness.

Every walk of life has its proper way to serve God and thereby further the soul's progress toward perfect union with Him. Of priests, God demands that in all their actions they conduct themselves as other Christs, making every word and deed the occasion for complete union with the innermost thoughts and aspirations of the Word Incarnate. For this, they have the grace of state. Whenever they exercise their ministry, performing the sacred rites and ceremonies and pronouncing the sacramental words by which the divine life of grace is brought to souls through the power that resides in the redemption of Christ—whenever they do this and more, the grace of state is always present to help them. If they are faithful to this grace, God will conform and transform them interiorly to the image of Christ.

The priest, therefore, who in every act of his priestly ministration endeavors with all his heart and soul to be wholly one with Christ, will rapidly rise to a very high degree of perfection. Such a priest will escape the snare of the commonplace to which, unhappily, so many in the priesthood fall victim even when occupied with the most sacred realities. Such a priest will never be mired in the bog of mediocrity. For him, to be a priest means to be, in every sense of the word, another Christ. It means to be solicitous for souls, sparing no effort to convey to them the divine life of grace. Moreover, in the priestly work of sanctifying souls he knows how to find the secret of his own sanctification. There are, thank God, ever so many priests who are truly other Christs, outwardly unassuming yet inwardly burning with zeal for souls, priests who are living manifestations of Jesus to the world, always seeking the glory of the Father, priests who are veritable Saviour-Christs to souls.

7. ONENESS WITH CHRIST THE TEACHER

The priest is another Christ, not only at the altar when he offers to the adorable Trinity the pure, the holy, and all-perfect

sacrifice by which the world was redeemed, or when through the sacraments he brings to men the divine life of grace. The priest is also another Christ whenever by reason of his sacred ministry he fulfills the role of teacher and ruler of souls. For in this way, too, he continues on earth the sanctifying mission that Jesus entrusted to His Church. As we have many times said, the life of the priest is a prolongation on earth of the redeeming life of Christ. But whereas in exercising his power of orders the priest is a pure instrument of Christ, in the work of teaching and directing souls his personal worth and weight carries a preponderant role. Hence, the more the soul of a priest is filled with God the more it will radiate the light of Christ.

In this connection, it is to be noted that whenever the growth of the mystical body stagnates, it is because the Church lacks authentic teachers and leaders. Hence the grave duty of the priest to be assimilated in heart and mind with Christ the Teacher and King, so that through Him he may come to possess the knowledge and discernment as well as the resoluteness that he needs to fulfill in its entirety his office as Christ to souls. This duty is the more incumbent on him nowadays because, more than formerly, the Church delegates to priests an ever-increasing measure of the bishop's power to teach and rule. Furthermore, in an age like ours when science and learning in general are held in such high esteem among men, the priest himself must be learned in his own field. This he will be only through diligent and persistent study of divine truth. Moreover, if the priest is to carry the teaching of Christ to people whose background varies from one extreme to the other, he must be a man of wide culture and learning. But the most important reason for having to be a man of study is that without considerable time and effort given to it, the priest can hardly expect to enjoy a strong and sagacious spiritual life of his own.

Today as perhaps never before, men look to the priest for an answer to the great questions on which hangs their eternal destiny. Once more, in this matter of study and learning as else-

where, Christ is the model for the priest. Like the priest, Christ had knowledge on the human level and in the human manner; and on this level He grew and advanced in wisdom with a rapidity that astonished His countrymen. But Christ also had knowledge on the supernatural level; and on this level His mind, suffused with the understanding that was His as the Word of God and the second Person of the Trinity; on this level, to repeat, His mind possessed the highest possible participation in God's own knowledge and vision, so that even the knowledge in His human soul encompassed all beings of the universe and all the mystery of our redemption.

Like Christ, therefore, the priest must be a contemplative, allowing nothing to divert his focus and attention from the Father. For His work in the world of men must always begin with God as its highest source, and be continually renewed in God as its highest sustenance. To be a priest, then, means to be like Christ; it means to keep one's spiritual focus firmly fixed on God and, like Christ, to live in the world radiating the Light of Life. The faithful, who are often so ignorant of, and at the same time so eager to know about, the mysteries of God, may not hold it against the priest if he is unlearned in the secular sciences. What they do expect is that he have a full and firm grasp of the things of God. And they have a right to expect this, since in these matters his word is received as though it came from the lips of Christ Himself—as, in effect, it does. "He who hears you, hears me." [9] Hence, for the worthy accomplishment of his mission to teach the truth of God, the priest must have the knowledge and understanding that befits the Christ he is.

8. ONENESS WITH CHRIST THE KING

There are priests whose only work consists in fulfilling the mediatory mission of the priesthood. This alone is more than enough to keep them occupied throughout the day. The Carthusian priest-monk or, more generally, the wholly contemplative

priest, leads such a life. The whole course of his supernatural activity centers primarily around the mystery of the Mass, in which in the name of the Church he offers up Christ unto the praise and glory of the Trinity. This, moreover, is the principal work of every priest; for one is a priest for God above all for the purpose of offering to the Father of all mankind the religious cult and worship that is due Him. The highest expression of this worship is the offering of Christ in the Mass. Everything else is additional to the priesthood. Thus, the priest performs a role supplementary to his priesthood when he turns from the altar to bring the same Christ of the Mass to the faithful, so that the mystical body may in turn be admitted to communion with Christ, and through Him, with Him, and in Him, be lifted up to God to be perfected in unity.

Besides offering the sacrifice of the Mass, however, the great majority of priests must also perform the office of teacher and ruler. To be sure, this mission to teach and rule belongs inherently to the bishop, but because the needs of souls are too great to be met by his personal efforts, the Church accords to priests an ever larger share in the role of teacher and ruler. Thus priests become co-workers with the bishop, sharing in his mission as head of the Christian community, which he is charged with bringing to the City of God.

The priest with these additional duties must be holy in a measure that goes beyond the holiness of the priest who does not have them. Needless to say, however, his first holiness is that required of every priest who is to offer Christ to God and to souls. He must approach the Holy Sacrifice with hands that are spiritually pure and unstained, worthy to handle, each day, the body, the blood, the soul, and the divine nature of the Word Incarnate. But this is not enough for the priest to whom the Church entrusts these other duties as well; for in virtue of them he is required to possess, to a degree not equally imperative on another, the ardent love of supernatural charity that must motivate all pastoral care. This priest, and, generally speaking, today every

priest, must model himself not only on Christ the Priest but also on Christ the Teacher and King. Too many priests do not sufficiently recognize the scope and importance of their office as head and ruler. In this, as in other respects, Christ is their exemplar. Christ—need we say it?—was fully aware of this role in His own life; and that is why He possessed, in a unique degree, the conviction that the responsibility for the salvation of the world rested solely on Him—as indeed it did. Every priest should have something of this same conviction, should work and pray as if the salvation of the world were his sole responsibility.

If the priest of today is to exercise his priesthood to the full extent required by the actual conditions of the world and the Church, these additional qualities of teacher and ruler are absolutely essential to him. Consequently, any doctrine of the spiritual life for priests will not be complete unless it takes account of these, their complementary, offices. Yet this has not always been emphasized as it should. There are two virtues especially which, it would seem, ought to be given more recognition than is customary in the life of a priest, as indeed in the life of any man entrusted with the office of ruler. These are the virtues of prudence and fortitude. Together with these there should be more emphasis, also, on the virtues connected with them, such as the capacity for resolute decision, the cultivation of a mature sense of responsibility, and the fostering of a magnanimous and generous disposition.

Doubtless, it is the episcopal state in the first place that requires a spirituality such as this, namely, one that meets the special needs of a ruler. But to the extent that he shares in the pastoral care of the bishop, every Catholic priest needs a spirituality that provides him with the means of acquiring holiness in the active, apostolic life. In fact, the higher one's responsibility in regard to souls and the greater one's measure of participation in the pastoral care of the bishop over his flock, the more rigorous are the demands of holiness. Thus, even among bishops the degrees of responsibility are not the same for all; conse-

quently, the demands of holiness and perfection incumbent on the episcopal state vary not only from one episcopal see to another but also in proportion to the extent that the pope admits a bishop to share his pastoral care as supreme shepherd of the flock of Christ. It is up to each bishop, and each priest, to weigh honestly and sincerely his responsibilities before God. For, on the Day of Judgment each shepherd will have to render an account of the souls that Christ entrusted to his care.

On the whole, it is as head and ruler, with responsibility for souls, that the present-day priest must gain the holiness demanded of him. The manifold work which the priesthood today must assume requires that priests have an acute sense of their responsibility and a deep appreciation of the virtues that are specifically adapted to their additional duties. Hence, as mentioned earlier, a complete and authentic spirituality for priests must put the life of the priest in its true light and setting. In other words, it should meet the needs of the priesthood not only in its role as a continuation of the specifically priestly life of Christ but also in its role as the perpetuation of His life as Teacher and King. Such a spirituality would be inspired by principles that are traditional and perennial, but it would also incorporate elements that are new and gauged to modern needs.

We have previously said that it is imperative for the modern priest to possess those complementary virtues that relate specifically to his role as head and ruler. What this means is that the spirituality of the priest must be accommodated not only to his office as mediator but also to the increasing demands made on him by the active life. In all this, let it be remembered, the interior life is to suffer no diminution. Never may we minimize the primacy of the interior life or neglect the prayer and contemplation by which it is nourished. But the priest should, it seems, make more effort to realize in himself the whole pattern of life traced by the Apostles or, better still, he should make more effort to imitate Christ in every phase of His life, that is, not only His life as Priest but also His life as Teacher and King.

Too long has the priest limited his activities to the confines of church and sacristy, as it were. Like Christ, he ought to go everywhere and penetrate every environment, exercising his priestly power to sanctify, spreading light and knowledge and showing himself a leader and ruler by his action. For, as one who bears rule over souls in the name of Christ, there is nothing, either in private or public life, that is not his legitimate concern. This is what Christ meant when He said: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you." [10] Or when He said: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." [11] This is his commission. For the priest is Christ still present among men through His visible representative, who in His name is enjoined to make them divine by grace, to instruct and to rule them, in short, to work their salvation by bringing them to God. The soul of the priest, therefore, should possess to an eminent degree all the virtues possessed by the soul of Christ the Priest, the Teacher, the King.

9. THE PRIEST IS ANOTHER CHRIST

The whole dogma of the priesthood as well as the whole doctrine of priestly spirituality is summed up in the traditional formula: "The priest is another Christ." All the powers and obligations of the priest stem from this basic truth, this ultimate insight supplied by faith. This is the cardinal principle that both inspires and elucidates all theology of the priesthood. The priest is "another Christ" because, on the one hand, the sacramental character bestows on him the priestly powers of Christ, and because, on the other hand, the grace of the sacrament of orders conforms his soul to the soul of Christ the Mediator.

Thus, in the first place, the priest is "another Christ" offering to the Blessed Trinity the one sacrifice of redemption, a sacrifice that renders infinite glory to God and secures for all mankind the graces and benefits that Jesus merited by His incarnation

and His death on the Cross. Infinite in themselves, the fruits of this sacrifice are received by men in proportion to their desire to partake of them.

Again, the priest is "another Christ" ever solicitous for the welfare of men, seeking to make them holy and Godlike through the divine life of grace. Thus, when the priest in the name of Christ grants a human being the pardon of Christ, all stain is removed from his soul, even should his sins have been long and enduring. For, with this pardon he receives the grace and friendship of God, together with every means to attain the highest holiness. Through the priest, then, Christ still walks among men on earth, exercising His role of Redeemer and Saviour.

In addition, the priest is "another Christ" proclaiming to men the revealed message of the kingdom of God, preaching the gospel to the poor, expounding to the lowly and the learned the deepest mysteries of the Trinity, and teaching them all to see in the most menial tasks of their daily lives the fulfillment of God's holy will.

Furthermore, the priest is "another Christ" conducting mankind to the City of God. Pope, bishops, and even simple priests, to the extent of their delegated powers, organize the Christian community and governs the people of God. Regardless of his rank, he rules in the name of Christ the King, the supreme lawgiver and the universal executor of the eternal decrees of the Trinity. Verily, the priest is "another Christ" in every way, another Christ as Priest and Teacher and King.

Like Christ, a faithful priest thinks only of God's glory and the redemption of souls. Every other thought is banished from his heart. Through a life of continual prayer he will always be mindful of the Father's presence, and through this same unceasing prayer he will fulfill his role as mediator between God and men. Like Christ, he will be ever living to intercede with the merciful Trinity in behalf of the salvation of men. One only ideal will engage his soul: the ideal of Christ glorifying the Father and redeeming the world. One only purpose will motivate all his

actions: the good of souls for the greater glory of God. Such a mission demands more than ordinary holiness. It demands a holiness far superior to the requirements of every form of the religious life. To be a worthy priest, he must serve God and men with the soul, with the heart and mind, of a Christ. To the extent that his functions in the mystical body place him above the faithful, by so much must his personal holiness surpass not only the holiness that is expected of all Christians, but even that which is incumbent on men and women in the religious life, consecrated to God by solemn profession.

The most obscure priest of the countryside, therefore, is obliged to be more holy than any monk or Carmelite nun. The purity and holiness required of him is above that of the consecrated virgin. To offer Christ to the most Blessed Trinity and to obtain for men the graces of salvation, he needs the very holiness of the Word Incarnate. Of himself, he could never hope to reach such heights—he is far too weak and human. That is why with his whole heart and soul he must seek to attain utter union and oneness with Christ. The more he resembles Christ, the more priestlike he will be. His vocation is to live as "another Christ," that is, for the glory of the Father and the redemption of the world. That, in short and in the whole, is the ideal of the priest. For it was not chance nor misnomer, but unerring insight, when the Christian instinct identified the priest as "another Christ": *Sacerdos alter Christus.*[12]

II. THE PRIESTHOOD AND UNION WITH MARY

In the economy of redemption under which the world now lives, the whole dispensation of grace is governed by a law that admits of no exception. In other words, even as God gave His Son to the world only through Mary, so He continues to give Him to the souls of men only through Mary. The providential mission of the Mother of God, which began on earth at the mo-

ment when the Word took flesh, is carried on in the Church through her mediatory action in behalf of the mystical body. To each of us, then, Christ still comes as the fruit of her womb. The Mother of Jesus, conceiving by her fiat both the head and the members, became, and forever remains, the Mother of the total Christ. In the words of St. Bernard: "Such is the immutable will of God. All we have He wanted us to have through Mary." [13]

I. THE PRIEST AND THE MOTHER OF CHRIST

From the basic principle just stated follows a very practical conclusion, one that has a direct bearing on our daily life: namely, without Mary we can do nothing. Trying to come to God without Mary is like trying to fly without wings. The more a priest has recourse to the all-powerful mediation of Mary, the more fruitful will be his ministry. The fact is that a very close similarity exists between the priest and Mary, for they have the same mission. Both the priest and Mary give Christ to the world and offer Him continually and unceasingly to the Father for the redemption of men and the glory of the Trinity. Thus, a common work unites the priest and the Mother of Jesus. Both, we have said, offer Christ to God and bring Him to the souls of men.

In comparing the priest with the Mother of God, however, caution should be taken against every form of exaggeration. There are those who like to exalt the power and grandeur of the priest by drawing a parallel between the divine motherhood and the priesthood. Yet it needs to be clearly understood that the priest himself is a servant of Mary, the incomparable Mother of God and the Mother of us all in Christ. The priest's role in the Church ranks immeasurably below that of the universal motherhood of Mary. Granted that the Mother of God was not given the most extraordinary power to cause Christ's presence on earth as she pleased, by pronouncing the words of consecration over the bread and wine. Still the priest himself owes it to the Mother of

Christ that the Church possesses the Word Incarnate whom, through him, this same Church causes to be present on the altar. It was she alone, among men, who gave Him to the world, by giving Him a body fashioned of her womb. Had Mary not spoken her fiat, the Church would possess neither Christ nor priesthood nor sacrifice nor sacraments. She alone furnished to the mystical body the one Priest, all others being only His ministers and instruments. She alone provided the one Victim pleasing to God.

Consequently, we must resolutely adhere to the conception that the sacrificial and sanctifying power of the priest represents a function which strictly depends on the divine motherhood. The purpose of this power, remember, is to make available to all men the very benefits of the incarnation, but this itself was made possible only through Mary. The priest of Christ, then, is but the humble servant of Mary. And if it is true that nothing can compare with the power of the priest at the altar, it is not less true that the very source of this supereminent greatness reaches back to Mary's fiat, to the word of consent by which she gave to the world and to all mankind the Word Incarnate, being thereby ennobled and exalted to the highest honor of all, the Mother of God. Nevertheless, the priest, though a servant, is a privileged servant of Mary. The reason for this predilection lies in the close similarity and connection between the mediatory role of the priest and the mediatory action of Mary. She who formed the eternal Priest of her own flesh and blood continues to form the image of this same Christ in the soul of the priest. The more responsive his soul to the action of Mary, the more it will be like the soul of Christ the Priest and Victim.

2. OFFERING CHRIST WITH MARY

The priest should always strive to be worthily disposed for Mary's supernatural action that conforms him to the image of Christ; but this is especially important at the Mass. If he is faithful to the grace of his priesthood, at the altar he will be as was

St. John at the Cross; he will be close to Mary. One of the best and most admirable practices of a priest is to seek to be one with the mediatory soul of Mary. The more he identifies himself at the altar with the inmost sentiments of the Mother of God, the more worthy his soul will be to offer expiation, adoration, and thanksgiving; and the more powerful and efficacious, also, will be his prayer before God.

When the heart of the priest is one and united with the heart of the Coredemptress of the world, he can more securely and more completely unite himself with the one will and desire that animated the heart of Jesus on the Cross, namely, the will to glorify the Father and redeem the world. Let the priest, then, put aside all striving for the trivial and the commonplace; let him take his perspective from the vast horizons encompassed by the redemption, and he shall soon have achieved perfect union and complete oneness with the mediatory soul of Mary.

3. SAVING SOULS WITH MARY

The Mother of God, we have said, conforms the soul of the priest to the image of Christ, specifically to Christ in His state of intimate life and converse with God in heaven. But the Mother of God is with the priest in all his ministry to souls. Indeed, could one imagine that our Lady would not interest herself in a supernatural work whose purpose is to form Christ in the world and to increase the number of God's children—children that are also her own? The fact is that the priest can never obtain any grace for a soul without the intervention—invisible, yet real and certain—of our Mother in Christ. All graces must first pass through the hands of Mary, be it the grace of understanding, the grace to be strong and courageous, the grace to be pure and detached, the grace to be faithful to one's vocation, or any other grace. Without exception, all supernatural gifts and benefits that Christ bestows on the Church through the priesthood must first pass through Mary.

It follows that the more a priest makes his work depend on the Mediatress of all graces, the more his priestly action will abound in efficacy. The whole life of the priest, therefore, should move in an atmosphere of intimate union with Mary. Whether he is administering the sacraments or fulfilling his mission to teach and rule souls, he ought to be deeply sensible that he is always associated with the coredemptive work of Mary, and that with her and through her and in her he shares the mission of building the total Christ to completion, unto the greater glory of the Trinity.

4. THE PRIEST OF MARY

Mary plays a unique and necessary role in the economy of our redemption. Though every day new advances are made in the study of this role, as yet the Christian world in general has not sufficiently probed the meaning of her place in the redemption. With Blessed Grignon de Montfort we could say that Mary is not known enough.

The liturgy has made us familiar with a phrase that sets forth, aptly and concisely, the central position of Christ in the economy of our life in God. *Per ipsum, cum ipso, et in ipso.* Through Him, with Him, and in Him all praise and glory of creatures is offered to God the Father in the unity of one Spirit. What we want to stress here is that Mary plays an analogous role, though always dependent on the primary mediation of the Word Incarnate. Of her we can say: *Per ipsam, cum ipsa, et in ipsa.* It is through her, with her, and in her that the soul must make its way upward to the adorable Trinity.

Through Mary. God came into the world by Mary. The Word was made flesh and dwelled among us—in and through Mary. The eternal decree of God is unchanged. All graces of the incarnation and the redemption must pass through the hands of Mary. The priest who brings Christ to souls must first have received Him from her. It is his role to offer the total Christ to God. But only through Mary.

With Mary. The Mother of Christ has given us her Son. But, in a way, that is not all; she herself wants to abide with us. All Christians, the priest especially, must live in close union with Mary. She is a perfect model of holiness, always ready to receive him. Better than anyone else, she can teach him how to imitate Christ. For the closer a soul is to Mary, the more it will be one and united with Christ. In regard to the priest, living with Mary means making her the partner and confidante of all his priestly work. It means to find in her role of universal Mediatress the support for every moment of his priestly life, so that through her he can convey the grace of God to the souls of men.

In Mary. Not every union with Mary is the same. In this respect the priest occupies a special position. His union and intimacy with Mary is to be a privileged one, so that his soul and that of the most Blessed Virgin no longer are two souls, as it were, but one. Such a form of devotion to Mary is far above the ordinary. What we mean is that for the priest life in Mary is not a matter of imitating a far-off ideal. His soul is called to seek and achieve the transforming union through and in Mary. Paraphrasing St. Paul, he should be able to say: "It is no longer I that live, but Mary lives in me. For me, to live is Mary, the better to live in Christ in the unity of the Trinity." When the soul has come to this point, it no longer lives in itself, but it lives entirely in Mary. Every act of the soul then exemplifies the ideal of holiness to which St. Ambrose summons us in his commentary on the Magnificat. "Let each of us," he asks, "have the soul of a Mary, so as to magnify the Lord." [14] Briefly, such a soul has but one thought and desire: to lose itself in Mary.

For Mary. The priest, we have said, should live only for Mary. But he will not stop there. He will live only for Mary as Christ lived only for His Father. He should live in Mary, the better to live in Christ. This is a thought that hinges on the hiddenmost designs of God's eternal decree. It reminds us that the whole universe is not only ordained to the highest glorification of Christ and the Trinity, but is also entirely ordained to the glory of

Mary. We need have no misgiving on this point. The Mother of God will not claim for herself the least particle of glory that belongs to the adorable Trinity. Blessed Grignon de Montfort put it well when he remarked that, compared with God, Mary is entirely relative and dependent. For, when we sing the praises of the Virgin, it is only a refrain—the refrain of the Magnificat praising God.

III. THE ONE ETERNAL PRIEST

Christ's priesthood is essentially one, with a oneness shrouded in mystery. Only the mind of God can penetrate this mystery in all its breadth and depth. The mind of man must approach it indirectly. He comes to it by way of the visible ministers of the Church. His eye of flesh sees the human priest, but his eye of the mind must go beyond, to discover in the visible priest the one Mediator between God and man, the one eternal Priest of the world: Jesus Christ.

By faith we know that it is not the Church, but Christ, that is the principal minister in offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We know it is Christ who baptizes, forgives sins, and administers all the other sacraments.[15] But it is Christ working through His priests. Through their instrumentality He continues in the world His work of worship and sanctification, and His highest work of all: the glorification of the Father. He is the one eternal Priest. All others are priests only insofar as they are one with Him and in Him. Commissioned by Him, they act in His name and person. Whatever power they have to redeem and sanctify is the result of His ever present and ever actual influence and operation in them. When they speak the words of the Holy Sacrifice, or pronounce the sacramental formulas, the Son of God Himself is present to offer Himself, by their hands, to His Father, and to bring to all generations the graces and benefits of His death on the Cross.

Indeed, what would be the condition of the Church on earth

without this real presence of Christ, ever Priest and Victim? Mere human lips could never render God the praise and glory worthy of Him. But the Word Incarnate is present in the Church, permanently exercising within her His eternal priesthood, offering Himself with her and in her, and glorifying His Father through the infinite merit and excellence of His divine Person. The Church militant, knowing herself to be weak and sinful, is acutely aware of the need to seek refuge in Him who, in His own right, always has access to the Father. Conscious of her own limitations as well as of the purely ministerial nature of her role, the Church comes to the Mass with but one thought and desire, namely, to be completely absorbed in Christ, like the drop of water in the chalice of wine, so that, through Him and with Him and in Him, she herself may be worthy to be offered up unto the praise and glory of the Trinity. In a word, the entire worship of the Church is offered to God through Christ in His Eucharistic presence.

Furthermore, even as all worship is offered through Christ, so the divine life of grace by which men share in God's life comes from the Trinity through the priestly hands of Christ. His ministers, it is true, dispense the fruits of His redeeming blood, but it is Christ Himself who sanctifies the soul. The Church is only the instrument and minister of His priesthood, acting under constant impulse and influence of her Head.

Christ's priestly activity in our behalf never ceases. The instrument of this activity is His human nature. Substantially united to the Person of the Word, this nature is like a channel through which must flow all graces that the Trinity confers on the world. Every element of His human nature ministers to His role as Mediator of grace. All His human faculties—His understanding, His will, His sense faculties, His rights and privileges as the Son of God in the flesh—all these contribute instrumentally to the unceasing application of the merits of His redemption. His priestly activity in our behalf, we have said, never ceases. It is

through the Church that Christ the Priest still watches over souls and labors for their salvation.

Thus, by means of His eternally abiding priesthood, which is everlasting, transcending the conditions of time and space, Christ is truly the center of the world and of history, the living and enduring bond between men and God. If we could see the mystery of Christ's priesthood with the clear vision of the Father, more than anything else it would appear as a miracle of union and unity. Since the incarnation, heaven and earth are united in the possession of a supreme pontiff who is Jesus, the Son of God, the one Priest of all creation. Hence, if the Word Incarnate ceased to exercise His own ever actual mediatory action in the human priest, the priesthood of the Church would lose all efficacy and fruitfulness in the souls of men, and the Church on earth would be without Christ.

In heaven Jesus, the eternal Priest, is always before the presence of the Father and in the midst of the elect, the redeemed of His blood, who are united with Him in unceasing adoration. The angels themselves, cherubim and seraphim, adore the majesty of God only through Him, the Priest of angels. The Church on earth, also, possesses Christ as Priest and Victim. Through Him, with Him, and in Him, she shares in the same life of praise and prayer as the Church triumphant. Thus, through Christ the whole mystical body is united in one and the same worship of God, a worship that renders Him infinite praise and glory. For Christ is the Priest of His Church, the Priest of all men and all angels, the one Priest of the universe.

Notes on Chapter Ten

[1] On this point Pope Pius XI wrote as follows in the encyclical *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii* ("The Catholic Priesthood," Dec. 20, 1935): "The priest is the minister of Christ, an instrument, that is to say, in the hands of the Divine Redeemer. He continues the work of the Redemption in

all its world-embracing universality and divine efficacy. . . . Thus the priest, as is said with good reason, is indeed 'another Christ'; for, in some way, he is himself a continuation of Christ.

"And since the priest is an ambassador for Christ (II Cor. 5:20), he should so live as to be able with truth to make his own the words of the Apostle: 'Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ' (I Cor. 4:16). He ought to live as another Christ, who by the splendor of His virtue enlightened and still enlightens the world" (Vatican Press trans., Washington, D.C., 1936).

[2] In his encyclical Pope Pius XI emphasized the mediatory role of the priesthood: "The human race has always felt the need of a priesthood: of men, that is, who have the official charge to be mediators between God and humanity, men who should consecrate themselves entirely to this mediation, as to the very purpose of their lives, men set aside to offer to God public prayers and sacrifices in the name of human society."

Accordingly, the priest is primarily ordained, not for himself or his personal holiness, but for the service of the whole Church: "Holy orders are conferred as a remedy, not to one person, but to the whole Church" (*Suppl.*, 35,1,ad 1m).

[3] Priests, says the Supplement to the *Summa,* "are made intermediaries between God and the people. For this reason they should shine with a good conscience before God, and with a good name before men" (36,1, ad 2m).

[4] Heb. 10:5–7.

[5] John 11:41.

[6] Cf. Heb. 7:25.

[7] Cf. Heb. 5:7.

[8] Cf. Luke 22:44.

[9] Luke 10:16.

[10] John 20:21.

[11] Matt. 28:19–20.

[12] Pope Pius XI laid great stress on the pre-eminent holiness required of the priest, particularly in the following passage: "Every reason we have urged in showing the dignity of the Catholic priesthood does but reinforce its obligation of singular holiness; for as the Angelic Doctor teaches (*Suppl.*, 35,1,ad 3m): 'To fulfill the duties of holy orders, common goodness does not suffice; but excelling goodness is required; that they who receive orders and are thereby higher in rank than the people, may also be higher in holiness.' "

The Pope, still on the same point, continues: "It would be a grave error fraught with many dangers should the priest, carried away by false zeal, neglect his own sanctification, and become over immersed in the external works, however holy, of the priestly ministry. . . . Hence the Church publicly urges on all her clerics this most grave duty, placing it in the Code of her laws (Can. 124): 'Clerics must lead a life, both interior and exterior, more holy than the laity, and be an example to them by

excelling in virtue and good works.'" This obligation, we might add, is the more grave inasmuch as on the holiness of the priesthood depends the holiness of the Church.

In our own day Pope Pius XII has issued a most important apostolic exhortation dealing entirely with the development of holiness in the priestly life, namely, the exhortation *Menti Nostrae,* published September 23, 1950.

In a celebrated passage, now become classic, St. Thomas bases the obligation of pre-eminent holiness on the dispositions of soul that the priest must have to correspond with the pre-eminent character and greatness of his priestly functions: "If the religious lacks orders, as is the case of those who are brothers and not priests in religion, this is a clear indication of the pre-eminence of orders in regard to dignity. For by holy orders one is deputed to the highest offices, by which Christ Himself is served in the sacrament of the altar. For this work, even greater interior holiness is required than for the religious state" (II–II,184,8). According to St. Thomas the priest should bear the highest possible conformation to Christ and God: *deiformissimus et Deo similimus.*

[13] Sermon *"In Nativitate* B.V.M." *P.L.,* 183,441.

[14] *Expositio in Luc.,* Bk. II,no.26.

[15] "It is Christ Himself that performs the sacraments of the Church. For it is He that baptizes, He that forgives sins, He that is the true Priest who offered Himself on the altar of the Cross, and by whose power His body is daily consecrated on the altar" (*Contra Gentiles,*IV,76).

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Extreme Unction: Death and Departure in Christ

SUMMARY: 1. At the End of Life. . . . 2. The Final Purifications. . . . 3. Purification of the Senses. . . . 4. Purification of the Soul. . . . 5. The Last Agony. . . . 6. To the Father's House.

Extreme unction is the sacrament of departure from this world to meet Christ in the next.

CHRIST provided for every need. No sooner is a man born than Christ comes to bestow on him the initial graces of salvation. Thereafter, through the other sacraments, Christ accompanies him all during his earthly existence. And at the end, when death approaches, He is again present to impart one last sacrament, so that the dying Christian may leave the world as befits him.

1. AT THE END OF LIFE

Almost every page of Sacred Scripture reminds us that man's life on earth is fleeting, so fleeting in fact as to be terrifying. "Man," says the Book of Job, "cometh forth like a flower . . . and fleeth as a shadow." [1] How true it is! The day comes when his friends will say, "Why, just this morning he was still here, full of zest and joy; this evening, he is gone, leaving almost no trace behind. This was his dwelling, this his work bench; and that bed over there, only yesterday he still slept in it. Now—now he is gone, never to return." At such a time the words of St. Paul come home as never before: "The time is short. . . . this world as we see it is passing away." [2] On the day of baptism life is full of promise, and the end seems far off. But before a man knows

it, old age is upon him, and death is just around the corner—any moment could be his last. His day of toil is ended; his turn now to leave the world.

As he thinks back over the years, bitter regret may fill his soul, regret over the years of sin, over the numerous graces wasted and squandered. There is so much of this in the life of many a man or woman, so many sins committed, so many graces unheeded. The soul of the baptized is called to the summits of the divine life of grace, called to friendship with Christ. Yet so often it is held back by indifference, not to say wrongdoing. Rare indeed, a man may find, were his moments of fervor and fidelity. In vain were the graces of the redemption lavished on his soul: the graces of baptism, of confirmation and the sacrament of penance; the graces of his Holy Communions; the graces of matrimony or holy orders, as the case may be; not to mention all the prevenient and actual graces and all the promptings of the Holy Spirit, who is unceasingly interceding with the Father and the Son in behalf of the divine life in the soul of a child of God, this child and son that was called to achieve ever greater intimacy and fellowship with the three divine Persons of the Trinity, and with all the angels and saints.

But if the sinner must tremble at the approach of death, is there nothing to fear for the man who was fervent and faithful? Would that it were so! Yet who does not know that the thought of God's judgment was enough to cause even great saints to be afraid? For, more than others, they remembered and could not forget that Jesus had said to His followers: "You therefore are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect." [3] In face of such a demand many a man, left to himself, might well be tempted to despair as his end is nearing.

But the Christian is not left to himself. At this last hour Christ Himself comes to comfort His faithful with His almighty power of redemption and with His close presence. To prepare them for this hour of final combat He instituted a special sacrament: extreme unction. Its purpose is manifold. It completes Christ's

work of purification in the soul; it strengthens and sustains His elect to the end; it prevents their falling into the invisible clutches of the devil and brings them safely home, without delay, to the Father's house. Extreme unction is the sacrament of departure. It calls the priest to the bedside of the dying Christian. In the name of Christ he pardons his sins and conducts his soul to paradise.[4]

2. THE FINAL PURIFICATIONS

Extreme unction completes the work of purification begun in the sacrament of penance. Its purpose is to bring man to a state of perfect holiness, so that his soul may be ready for the immediate vision of the Trinity, accessible only to the pure of heart. Thus the soul is prepared to appear before God. In the prayer following the anointing the liturgy petitions for the full remission of sin and the full restoration of health to body and soul: "Cure, we beseech Thee, O our Redeemer, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the ailments of this Thy sick servant; heal his wounds; forgive his sins; relieve him of all miseries of body and mind; and graciously bless him with perfect health within and without [*plenamque interius et exterius sanitatem misericorditer redde*], that, being made well again by the gift of Thy goodness, he may be able to take up anew the duties of his state in life."

Even after a long life of sin, if the Christian receives the sacrament of the dying with the appropriate dispositions, he will go straight to heaven without having to go to purgatory.[5] For what confirmation is to baptism, extreme unction is to the sacrament of penance. As confirmation gives the fullness of the grace of configuration to Christ inaugurated in baptism, so does extreme unction bestow the fullness of the grace of purification begun in penance. In the view of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church this sacrament is, above all, the "consummation," the completion, of Christ's purifying action in the soul. Its effect is to remove every last trace of sin. All is forgiven; the soul's cleansing

is complete.[6] The very symbolism of the sacrament of extreme unction is strikingly suggestive of the effect it produces, namely, the utter removal of all trace of sin in every part of man, in body as well as soul. In the name of Christ the priest applies the holy anointings to every organ of sense, because it is in the senses that every moral defilement has its beginning.

3. PURIFICATION OF THE SENSES

The eyes are the first to be anointed with the sacred oils, for theirs is the greatest guilt. Almost all our sins begin with the eyes. All is clean when the eye is clean. Who can count the number of sins engendered by sight? Lewd theatricals, sinful reading, dangerous company keeping deliberately sought, various occasions of sin following on the heels of the thousand and one interrelationships with others, whether on a personal basis or on the wider basis of family and social gathering: this whole mass of sin enters the soul through the gateway of sight. At the end of life who, I ask, can count the number of such sins? The sinner has one only refuge. All that is left is to submit his sins to the mercy of God and the pardon of Christ. The anointing by the priest erases them all.

The ears of man bear a large measure of guilt, with their eager listening to words and suggestions leading to sin. It is the ears that make us the wanton confidants of dubious secrets and the willing victims of beguiling speech, that hold audience to the soft and voluptuous enticements of creatures, that give habitual reception to music that is caressing and soothing as sleep but eventually enfeebles the moral fiber of the soul, bringing on spiritual torpor, if not spiritual death. More than that, the ears often are the accomplices of the eyes and the other senses. Instead of being attentive to the word of God and the teaching of His incarnate Son, all too frequently the human soul hearkens to the hollow tumult of the world of sin. Thus it idles away its time, leaving God more and more behind. At the hour when it sees

the shadow of the world beginning to pass away, the sinful soul must turn, repentant, to Christ before it enters eternity. Extreme unction purifies it from the fault of seeking excessive gratification in the things of earth, having preferred to heed the solicitations of creatures instead of the call of the Creator.

After the ears have been anointed, the sacred oils are applied to the nose that the Lord may forgive us any sins we may have committed by abusing the sense of smell.

As for the lips of man, how could they remain pure when his eyes are not? They, too, are the source of a great number of sins. The mere enumeration of the sins of tongue and lips should cause a man to tremble. When he is enmeshed in the allurements of evil, all his senses are in revolt against the law of God, seeking, instead, self-love and selfish indulgence. Such a man, steeped more and more in evil, ends up being a creature of sin. In this process his tongue and lips bear a major share of guilt. Speech inviting to voluptuousness; speech recruiting sinful accomplices to every manner of evil; acrimonious, slanderous, calumnious speech; sly and seducing speech; speech hatching up plots against the security of the nation, or even against the security of the world as a whole, through the modern medium of radio: all this evil is the doing of a man's lips. Both in men and women sins of the tongue are most difficult to uproot. St. James says that "in many things we all offend," and, we might add, in none more so than in speech. For, as the Apostle continues, "if anyone does not offend in word, he is a perfect man." [7] Extreme unction removes these sins of the tongue, cleansing the lips of the Christian with the holiness of Christ.

The hands are next. They minister to every need of man. The agents of our inmost thoughts, they can work for evil as well as good. Like a man's features, they bear the stamp of his character and personality. All the faculties of man, both sensory and intellectual, share the responsibilities of his soul and reveal his most secret desires. Blessed, indeed, are those hands that have never been stained by evil. Many, all too many, are the unhappy

creatures that use them to do evil. The hands are man's instruments for all his tasks, whether manual, artistic, or intellectual. They are implicated in all our plans and resolutions. At the end of life, when their work is done, through the last anointing the blood of Christ will cleanse them of every evil to which they were accomplices. Then, when the soul has breathed its last, they will be reverently folded over the body, as though in prayerful posture before God.

If a man's other faculties are not innocent, neither are his feet. Whenever he went to places of sin, they took him there. The Church, therefore, does not hesitate to anoint them with the grace of the blood of redemption. The fact is that the whole man must be healed by Christ, his body and soul both. When one understands the faith, one is not surprised that even these faculties of lesser rank should be treated with such devotion. On the contrary, one can the more appreciate the special character, at once so human and so divine, of the sacramental rites and ceremonies. One can see, that is, that these rites are a sublime manifestation of the logic, the basic idea, of the incarnation, of whose merits they are the channels. The Church, for example, lovingly kisses the feet of her missionaries who are given the task to carry the gospel to distant lands. For similar reasons she prescribes that the priest, in the name of Christ, anoint the feet of the dying, since often, perhaps, they have taken him to places and persons of sin. Then, when the soul has departed, they are respectfully brought together, one touching the other, like the feet of Jesus on the Cross.

The symbolism of extreme unction displays a realism that strikingly manifests what it effects. It overlooks none of the faculties of man that may have been accomplices to his sins. The Church is concerned that every possible source of sin be purified. It is her wish that the Christian who is preparing to appear before God should be spotlessly clean throughout. This is the purpose of extreme unction, than which there is nothing that better reveals her earnest wish that every stain of sin be removed from

the dying Christian, so that he may be restored, as nearly as possible, to the state of original justice through this final and perfect conformation to the image of Christ.

4. PURIFICATION OF THE SOUL

The sacrament of extreme unction is intended to purify the whole being of man, not only his external senses, but the imagination, the memory, and all the other interior faculties, especially the spiritual faculties of intellect and will. The grace of redemption penetrates all the powers of the soul to their inmost depths. The external senses are only the means by which the interior faculties are incessantly nourished to be able to perform their living activities. The higher the faculties in the scale of operation, and the more they admit of being controlled by the will, the greater the necessity of the sacrament purifying them of their past misdeeds and all trace of sin.

Through the grace of the sacrament the imagination is brought under the control of reason and the dictates of faith. To the memory, too, peace and tranquillity are restored. Thus the aim of the sacrament is the soul's complete detachment from the world as death and eternity approach. God alone remains. Everything ephemeral and perishable is left behind. Priests whose ministry frequently calls them to the bedside of the sick can testify to the palpable effects of the grace of this sacrament, and the effects of the state of grace, in the soul of a dying man or woman. As the veil of death gradually obliterates the soul's outward vision of the things of earth, its inward vision begins to open, more and more, to the clear discernment of the other world. Christ has entered the uttermost recesses of the soul and its every faculty, removing all trace of past sins and every last vestige of earthly attachment that could delay the soul seeing its God immediately. Through the effects of this sacrament the soul, though still in the body, has already begun to breathe the life of eternity.

5. THE LAST AGONY

It cannot be sufficiently emphasized—so important is it—that the Christian should receive extreme unction while yet in full possession of his senses, so that he can approach it with all the living ardor of his faith, surrendering himself with full consciousness to the will of God through an act of perfect love.[8] Every mortal sin has already been forgiven through the sacrament of penance. Any lesser, venial faults that remain will be removed by Holy Communion received in the form of viaticum. If through inadvertence and in good faith other mortal and venial sins still lie on his conscience, the sacrament of the dying will obliterate them as well. But the principal[9] and special effect of this sacrament does not rest there; it is mainly intended for another purpose. Extreme unction is primarily directed, not to the forgiveness of sin, but to the eradication and complete destruction of every vestige thereof.[10]

It is to be remembered that man suffers not only from the wounds of original sin; he suffers also from the effects of his personal sins, each of which causes the effects of original sin to take deeper root in the soul. It is when he comes to die that these consequences of sin lay hold of a man as never before, leaving him almost helpless in soul as well as in body; and, truly, the soul is often more sick than the body. Through sin the cloud of ignorance lies over his understanding, shrouding the mystery of God, and the taint of malice infects his will. His sense appetite, moreover, has become unruly, tempting him repeatedly to turn his back on duty and danger.

The purpose of extreme unction is precisely to restore the faculties of man to the state of original strength and integrity they had before the Fall. It seeks to move the will to turn to God with the spontaneous love that is the hallmark of His children, and it strengthens the soul to face with undaunted courage this last hour of combat and struggle to gain Christ. The fullness of grace imparted by this sacrament is such that all the maladies

of the dying Christian's soul are healed, supplying him with the strength to bear, unfailingly, the sufferings of his last agony, however excruciating. Though it is true that the tendencies to evil resulting from past sinful and evil habits are not necessarily removed by the grace of the sacrament, nevertheless, through extreme unction the Christian soul so shares in Christ's triumphant power over sin as to be firm to the end. Steadfast in faith, the Christian possesses an assurance that brings peace to the soul as he faces the eternity awaiting him. Though memories of past sins crowd on his mind, his hope and trust in God is not diminished. Unreservedly he throws himself on the mercy of God, knowing Him to be a father more loving and kind than any other, and realizing that the hour has come when he will soon be able to love Him face to face in unending joy and happiness.

Extreme unction seeks to enlist every Christian virtue to prepare the soul for departure to God. Thus, the Christian will be mindful, for example, of the virtue of prudence, making opportune disposition of his earthly goods, so that his legitimate heirs will receive their due portion. This done, he will be ready to leave everything behind. In disposing of his earthly possessions one overriding concern will motivate his soul: that justice be done in regard to God. He will see to it that reparation be made for his faults, that prayers be offered for the pardon of his soul and for the sins of the world; above all, that thanks be given to God for all His gifts and blessings, especially for the gift of final perseverance. Having settled his earthly affairs, he will be disposed to think only of God and His majesty and grandeur, offering repeated acts of adoration, confident all the while that God will soon reveal to him the glory and splendor of His countenance. There may be moments of anxiety and anguish, perhaps moments of weariness and irresolution. But throughout his last agony the grace of the sacrament will replenish his soul with strength and courage. For the closer the end, the more efficacious becomes the grace of extreme unction, bringing to the soul an ever-increasing measure of the strength of Christ Himself.

6. TO THE FATHER'S HOUSE

As baptism is the sacrament of initiation into the divine life of grace, so extreme unction marks the departure from this life to the Father's house in heaven. Between the first and the last sacrament, the other sacraments promote the continuous growth and union of the soul in the life of Christ.

Baptism lays the foundation of our life in God; through the grace of adoption of this sacrament the whole Christian life is put on a filial basis. Hence, in life as in death we are to deport ourselves as children of God. This quality of sonship which is to govern our whole bearing in regard to God is particularly accentuated in the epistles of St. John and St. Paul, the two great masters of the Christian spiritual life. St. John, for example, writes as follows: "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are." [11] It was for this that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The only-begotten Son became the first-born of many brethren, summoning us to share with Him the same divine life in the Father's house. Now that we are His sons, God's will is that we be guided by the Spirit of adoption, which means that in every circumstance of life we are to turn to God as to the Father more loving and kind than all others. All our prayer should, in effect, be like the great prayer of Christ, an utterance of absolute trust and unqualified submission, a veritable "Abba, Father! You, O God, are our Father!" The Christian life consists essentially in developing and fulfilling the grace of baptism. This grace, which is a grace of adoption, is our warrant for the attitude of filial intimacy and unconstraint that should typify our demeanor before God on every occasion.

The other sacraments enrich and enhance, with the same filial accent, the grace of adoption received in baptism. *Confirmation* gives us the fullness of the Spirit of God. Through it the soul receives, along with the gift of piety, an increased awareness of

the fatherhood of God, which is the source of our life as children of God, a life consisting in intimate fellowship and communion with the Trinity and with all the other members of God's family, the angels and saints.

The *Eucharist* is the sacrament that provides our daily bread; it is the nourishment which the Father dispenses to His children on earth in the form of the true Bread of Heaven, giving life to the world. *Penance* marks the return of the prodigal son to his Father's house, from which he had wandered far through sin. In His goodness God, who is our Father, restores to the straying sinner his status and privileges of sonship. Like a child come back, he again takes his place at the family table. All is forgiven. *Holy orders* and *matrimony* also further the growth of the Christian life on the same basis of sonship; in fact, they do so in a higher manner and degree because they share more intimately in the fatherhood of God, being more profoundly associated with God's action of creating and nurturing the bodies and souls of men for the building up of the City of God.

Like the other sacraments, *extreme unction* fosters the filial relationship which is the basis of the Christian life, being the concluding phase of this work. It prepares us, not simply to die, but to die as children of God. Like the Eucharist, it summons us to arouse the full fervor of our love for Christ, this time as a means to gain, without delay in the hereafter, eternal life in Him. In these last moments of life on earth, what is at stake is nothing less than our eternal allotment in the future life. That is why this last hour of suffering and affliction should be converted into an hour of supreme triumph. The death of saints is the crowning glory of their life. But they do not achieve it without a struggle. Only one who has stood at the bedside of the dying, witnessing their anxieties and agonies, can appreciate how much in need of God's helping grace is man's weak and sinful nature at that hour. The devil now redoubles his efforts to wrest an immortal soul from God for keeps. His prey is a poor human being, a sinner by any standard, brought low by sickness, faced with

imminent death, and burdened with the remembrance of all his past sins and misdeeds.

It is then that the sacrament of extreme unction brings timely assistance. It revives the Christian's trust and confidence, turning his thoughts to the mercy of God, and helping him to meet death with the same courage as Christ on the Cross. The Christ of baptism is again present at the end of life, comforting and supporting His elect for the hour of death. During these last terrible minutes heaven and hell are at war over the eternal lot of the redeemed. The outcome, however, need not be in doubt. The whole Church is praying for the dying; faith assures us that the treasury of Christ's merits alone, not to mention the merits from the communion of saints, contains an inexhaustible store of grace, which is our guarantee that the forces of evil shall not triumph.

Through the sacrament the redeeming grace of Christ abides in us. In some it may strengthen and enlighten their faith, giving them great peace and tranquillity. To others it may give the grace of unfailing hope in God and perfect surrender to His will. Many at this hour may need to be delivered from various temptations of the flesh, from the temptation to revile and blaspheme God or to succumb to discouragement. The grace of the sacrament adapts itself, in a remarkable manner, to the individual exigencies of all. In other words, through God's wisdom extreme unction can produce an almost endless variety of effects, according to each one's needs. Indeed, one cannot but wonder at the manifold benefits that may result from the sacrament of the dying, including the restoration of bodily health if this be beneficial to the soul's salvation.[12]

The point is that we must not regard the grace of extreme unction as rigidly determined, having the same uniform effect in every instance. St. Thomas says as much for the Eucharist. "See," he writes in the *Lauda Sion*, "how different are the effects from the same Communion." [13] What is true of the Eucharist is true of the other sacraments. Thus, the sacrament of matrimony may

be for some the source of the special grace they need to observe connubial chastity, remaining faithful to home and family. Others may need and receive the grace to persevere in lending help and support to each other, or the grace to provide their children with a Christian upbringing in the face of most trying circumstances. Similarly, extreme unction, we have said, helps the dying according to their special needs. The grace of Christ's redemption is manifold, producing diverse effects by the same sacrament, in this case extreme unction. In some its special effect may be to increase and strengthen their faith; others may at last be made aware of their obligation to render God His just due, or find new strength of soul, or further assurance and trust in God's merciful love; while others may be singularly moved to praise and thank God for His countless blessings. To more privileged souls this sacrament gives the grace to achieve the fervor of perfect love and the supreme grace of the transforming union, being made perfect in the unity of the Trinity. Not infrequently, a saint ends his life on earth in ecstasy that is immediately followed by the everlasting vision of God.

Ordinarily, the condition of one's faith has a great bearing on these last moments. If this virtue of faith be found wavering, then the very foundation of one's supernatural life, as well as one's fate in eternity, hangs in the balance. To souls wracked by doubt, the grace of extreme unction brings a willingness to embrace the word of God and the teachings of the Church. Sometimes, as in the case of certain saints, the whole reality of the supernatural is made vividly present. Even while still awaiting the end, they begin to be aware of the heaven that looms before them; they no longer believe, but see. Their spiritual vision, supernaturally enlightened, has already begun to contemplate the depths of the mystery of the Trinity. The world has become but a shadow to their bodily eyes, blinded as it were by the spiritual light. For these souls, one only reality abides: God. Such appears to have been the experience of St. Thérèse of Lisieux.

"The world," she softly murmured, "it has vanished, a fleeting shadow. . . . Heaven! It's heaven for me!"

Through the effects of the sacrament of departure, not only faith but all the Christian virtues achieve the glory of their power and strength. The virtue of hope, for instance, causes the soul to have not only the calm assurance, but even the anticipated possession, of the joys of paradise. It is with tranquil earnestness, then, that the soul looks forward to its rendezvous in heaven, to be near the Blessed Trinity. Death is accepted for what it is, a temporary separation. To loved ones left behind, it is not "Good-bye" but "Till we meet again." Many a man or woman can remember having heard these or similar words from the lips of a dying person. Perhaps they were the words of one's mother or father, getting ready to leave the world and go to God, words that reflected the peace and calm in their soul, spoken quietly after the priest had been there and when the whole family was gathered around, kneeling in prayer. Their life ended, and they were gone like a shadow; but through faith, not to say reason, the survivors were convinced beyond all doubt of the reality, as well as the mystery, of the everlasting beyond.

Thus, a mother on her deathbed confirms her children in their conviction that the family shall be reunited in heaven. For when the spirit of deep faith motivates the Christian life, the feeling of tragedy and despair that sometimes surrounds death is conspicuously absent. In fact, these final scenes assume a dignity as impressive as it is sacred. The sense of sorrow is relieved by the certainty that death is only the culmination in God of a life that is all His. Hence, death in God does not provoke the cry of desperation or the irremediable anguish that marks the death of the godless, haunted as they may be by the thought of utter extinction or consumed by remorse at the prospect of hell.

The death of the Christian, on the other hand, is a sleep in Christ. The body will pay its just debt to God, but the soul will know how to turn this supreme sacrifice into a sacrificial offering of love. The Christian attitude toward death is expressed by such

words as: "My God, I give You my body, my soul, my life!" Extreme unction is the grace of final and supreme configuration to Christ dying on the Cross for the glory of the Father and the redemption of the world. Ever since the day that Jesus died for us, death is but the voyage to life eternal.

The Church thoroughly understands the meaning of death as well as of life. With unerring insight she adopted the practice of celebrating the feast of her saints on the day of their death. She knows that the moment when all is ended on earth is the moment when all begins anew, to be made eternal, in God: *"Vita mutatur, non tollitur.* Life is not extinguished, only altered." [14] She attends the dying to open to them the gates of heaven. Her final exhortation says, in effect: "Go forth, O Christian soul; all is in order. The Christ of your baptism is there, awaiting you. He Himself will admit you into the Father's house, and there give you to taste the joy of the Lord."

Notes to Chapter Eleven

[1] Job 14:2.

[2] I Cor. 7:29, 31.

[3] Matt. 5:48.

[4] The Council of Trent refers to extreme unction as the sacrament of those who are departing: *sacramentum exeuntium* (Sess.xiv,cap.3).

[5] This is the explicit teaching of St. Thomas and the great medieval doctors. Thus, the Supplement to the *Summa* states: "This sacrament prepares a man for glory immediately, since it is given to those who are departing from this life in the body" (29,1,ad 2m). The Supplement, as noted earlier, though not written in its present form by St. Thomas, is commonly judged to narrate his authentic teaching. As far as the sacrament of extreme unction is concerned, the same doctrine as stated here, is found in the *Contra Gentiles,* IV,73.

St. Albert likewise teaches that extreme unction secures the full remission of the effects of all sins. "Extreme unction," he writes, "denotes the full purification of body and soul through the removal of every impediment that would occlude the state of glory to either of the parts of man, that is, to body or soul" (*In IV Sent.*,d.2,art.2). Again: "Because it

takes away every vestige of sin, extreme unction makes possible the immediate entrance to heaven" (*Ibid.*, d.23,art.1). The same teaching appears in St. Bonaventure and, as we have said, in the great Scholastics of the Middle Ages generally.

The theological basis for this teaching lies in the sacramental form itself, namely: "Through this holy unction may the Lord forgive you whatever sins you have committed" (form used in extreme urgency). Although historically there are certain differences in the forms of this sacrament, all are substantially the same. Already in the *Liber Ordinum,* which is based on the ancient Mozarabic liturgy, we find the following noteworthy text: "May the Lord forgive you all your sins, and may He heal all your maladies."

[6] The Church teaches that extreme unction not only completes the work of purification begun in the sacrament of penance but is the crowning perfection of the whole Christian life. "The Fathers," declared the Council of Trent, "regarded it as the fulfillment not only of penance but of the whole Christian life, which ought to be an uninterrupted penance" (Sess.xiv,Prooem.).

St. Thomas expresses the same view. "This sacrament," he says, "is the last, and in a way, the completion of the whole Christian healing, by which a man is, so to speak, prepared for sharing the life of glory; for this reason it is called extreme unction" (*Contra Gentiles,* IV,73).

The full remission of all sin and all punishment due to sin, which, *servatis servandis,* is the normal effect of the sacrament of extreme unction, is rarely achieved in practice, not for any lack on the part of the sacrament, but for want of proper preparation on the part of the recipient. All the more reason, then, why at this critical hour in life the family should try to create an atmosphere of prayer and earnest Christian solicitude around the dying person, so as to be of help in preparing him to appear before God.

[7] Jas. 5:2.

[8] The Church, through the Code of Canon Law, prescribes that every possible effort be made that the sick receive this sacrament while yet in full possession of their senses. See Canon 994.

[9] It is most important to keep in mind this capital point regarding the sacraments in general, namely, that each one produces a principal effect all its own. The theology of the sacraments cannot be truly understood without it. Thus, one can take it as axiomatic that every sacrament is instituted for a principal effect, from which all other effects of the same sacrament are derived. In baptism, for example, it is the grace of regeneration; in confirmation, the grace of Christian perfection; in the Eucharist, the grace of fervent love so as to be united with Christ in the Eucharist; in penance, the grace of forgiveness and restoration to divine life; in extreme unction, the grace of perfect healing in regard to the last vestiges of the sins of life; in matrimony, the grace to lead a conjugal and family life in Christ; and in holy orders, the grace to exercise the power of Christ

the Mediator with the soul, that is, the heart and mind of the same Christ.

On this point the Supplement to the *Summa* declares: "Every sacrament of the New Law was instituted for the purpose of one principal effect, although it may also, in consequence, produce other effects" (30,1). In regard to extreme unction in particular, it speaks as follows: "This sacrament is not an antidote to those defects which deprive man of spiritual life, namely, original and mortal sin, but is a remedy for such defects as weaken man spiritually, so as to deprive him of perfect vigor for acts of the life of grace or of glory; which defects consist in nothing else but a certain weakness and unfitness, the result in us of actual or original sin; against which weakness man is strengthened by this sacrament" (*Suppl.*, 30,1; Dom. Trans.).

[10] See Council of Trent, Sess.xiv,cap.2.

[11] I John 3:1.

[12] The Council of Trent gives an excellent summary of the several effects of the sacrament of extreme unction, which may be set forth as follows:

1) The *secondary* effect: remission of the mortal sins of the sick person who is in good faith.

2) The *principal* effect: removal of the last vestiges of sin and, by way of *consequence,* strengthening of the spiritual powers of the soul, and increase of hope in the divine mercy.

3) Lastly, the *sacramental* effect *subordinated* to the spiritual good of the sick person: restoration of bodily health and alleviation of his physical sufferings.

In the words of the Council: "The effect (*res*) of this sacrament is the grace of the Holy Spirit, whose anointing produces the following: It washes away the sins that remain to be atoned, and the vestiges of sin; it comforts and strengthens the soul of the sick person, arousing in him a great trust and confidence in the divine mercy. Thus strengthened, he bears the hardships and struggles of his illness more easily, and resists the temptations of the devil and the heel of the deceiver (Gen. 3:15) more readily; and if it be advantageous to the welfare of his soul, he sometimes regains his bodily health" (Sess.xiv,cap.2).

[13] "*Vide, paris sumptionis quam sit dispar exitus*"

[14] Preface of the Mass of the Dead.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Eternal Life in Christ

SUMMARY: 1. Everlasting Survival. . . . 2. Purgatory. . . . 3. Hell. . . . 4. Limbo. . . . 5. Paradise: The Possession of the Trinity. . . . 6. Eternal Light. . . . 7. Eternal Love. . . . 8. The Splendors of Glory. . . . 9. Eternal Praise and Adoration.

The eternal City of God is the fulfillment of the total Christ in the unity of the Trinity.

THE sacraments of the Church militant shall cease when the history of the world has run its course. The long procession of centuries, which to us may seem unending, shall one day come to a final halt. God shall appear in person. Then, enlightened by the Word, we shall understand how great was the love, and how great the wisdom, by which God brought each of His elect through the trials and sufferings of life to give them eternal abode in the Father's house.

As St. Paul reminds us, "this world as we see it is passing away." [1] Knowing this—indeed, knowing it as only she can—the Church on earth, pursuing her upward march to the eternal City, maintains an attitude of reserve to all transitory things around her. Neither the beauty of creatures nor the brilliant achievements of the genius of her Doctors nor the majestic splendor of her cult can cause her to forget, even for a moment, that on earth she walks a pilgrim, far from the Lord, homeless and exiled. It is not without impatience, one might say, that she abides her time, anxious to see her God face to face, as in the Credo she proclaims her earnest desire for eternity: *"Et exspecto . . . vitam venturi saeculi*—and I await the life of the world to come." This is her chant in the Credo, this her irrepressible cry of earnest longing for eternity.

In point of fact, the expectation of the Lord's return was uppermost in the mind of the first Christians. The Apostles and disciples of Jesus kept reminding them that "the Lord does not delay. . . . the day of the Lord will come as a thief." [2] They lived in the world as "strangers and pilgrims," [3] their hope in the City to come, their thoughts, not on things visible—things that are so fleeting and ephemeral—but on things invisible, which alone are eternal. Knowing that here they had not permanent dwelling, they deemed themselves en route to their abode in eternity.

I. EVERLASTING SURVIVAL

Reason itself declares that man does not die *in toto,* that his soul is spiritual and immortal, endowed as it is with a faculty, the faculty of thought, that reaches beyond space and time. Such a faculty presupposes a source or subject of inherence that is equally incorporeal and incorruptible, of the same order of being as the spirit world. In a word, the soul cannot die.

Jesus proclaimed the same truth, investing it with the authority that was His as God. The message of the gospel is a message that looks to eternity. God invites us to behold Him face to face, in an eternal presence. Catholic theology, moreover, has endeavored to determine more precisely the being and manner of this everlasting survival. We know that, from the moment of its arrival in the next world, the life of the soul is assimilated to the life of the spirit world, the angels, a life so different we can but dimly discern it now. For, in its state of union with the body, the soul cannot exercise its power of thought without the concurrence of an image, that is, without the medium of the external and internal senses, especially the sense of memory and imagination. Thus, even in the exercise of its spiritual faculties the soul unceasingly depends on the concomitant operations of its sensory powers.

After death, however, in the state of separation, the under-

standing of the soul, like that of the angels, has a direct and immediate knowledge of itself, knowing itself with an immediate insight that is as clear and illuminating as a flash of lightning. By this intuitive and unerring grasp of itself, the soul comprehends its inmost being and its eternal destiny. Furthermore, its natural capacity of understanding is supplemented by a divine illumination that is as gratuitous as it is revealing. Thus enlightened, in one instant it comprehends both its entire past, its present moment, and its future state.

At the moment of death, then, the soul, freed from the body, judges itself in the light of God's judgment. Thanks to the infused knowledge that it receives from the Trinity, it renders to itself an exact account of all its responsibilities, accepting, without self-excuse, the just sentence of the supreme Judge. The whole plan of redemption unfolds before its clear and unerring discernment, disclosing to it its own place in the economy of the universe. Accordingly, it will realize how great was God's love for itself all through life, and how great the blessings He bestowed. It will comprehend that God's providential rule over its life on earth, down to the smallest detail, was ever motivated by His divine mercy.

Thus, what before was darksome now becomes clear. Now it understands itself as never before, its comprehension penetrating to the hiddenmost recesses of its being. If on earth the real motives of its actions sometimes escaped its awareness, now it recognizes them for what they were, however subtle or disguised. It recognizes the secret influences that underlay its every course and conduct. Hence, it makes its own proper assessment of the consequences of its actions in regard to its own eternal destiny and in regard to the whole mystical body of Christ. In short, it sees itself as God sees it in His uncreated truth. Consequently, the soul that was faithful to Christ to the end will enter immediately into the state of glory. But the soul that neglected on earth to be fully united with God, will betake itself, of its own

accord, to the state of atonement and purification. Unbaptized infants, having committed no sins of their own, will go to limbo. And the soul that willfully turned its back on God, remaining utterly and finally separated from Him, will plunge itself into hell, to be there forever.

2. PURGATORY

But for the moral perversion of sin, each of its actions would bring the Christian soul closer to God, and at death it would go straightway to heaven. But, alas!, how many souls are holy enough to be immediately admitted to the presence of the Trinity? Is it not true that so many human beings enter eternity only just escaping hell owing to God's great mercy, and still obliged to a long temporal punishment in atonement of their sins? Even among faithful and devout Christians, how many are altogether spotless, seeking only the goodness and perfection of God? The spiritual life of all is beset by many imperfections, and many more failures, at least in small matters. Instead of advancing steadily in union with God, we loiter on the way, permitting the merest trifle to turn our thoughts from the great goal in life, the pursuit of perfection in the Trinity. True, we avoid the grave wrongdoing that would separate us from God; but our will is not steadfast in perfect love. Even the greatest saints have their moments of inadvertence and human weakness.

Having sinned, we need hardly be reminded that not only grave sin already forgiven, but every lesser sin as well, and every undue attachment to creatures, calls for atonement. The justice of God demands this. Hence the reason for purgatory. Having failed to make full satisfaction in life, the soul must do so in purgatory. This is a state that was not open to the angels; for, unlike man, they could not repent of their sin, nor sin venially. By one act they refused all, or gave all, irrevocably. For them, therefore, there was no alternative between heaven and hell.

Man, on the other hand, is a more feeble creature, the plaything, almost, of the many passions that darken his understanding and urge his will to yield. Thus, though he is reluctant to turn from God, he cannot escape the charm of creatures; and their almost magic spell is constantly threatening to reduce his senses to utter thralldom. He is divided against himself, the flesh warring against the spirit. That is why he is capable of those half-way faults and imperfections, as it were, that leave the soul more or less attached to creatures without completely separating it from God. This is a weakness, a regrettable weakness in man, which God must chastise by delaying the soul's vision of the beauty of His countenance.

This delay is an immeasurable pain for the soul, since in eternity it realizes, ever so much better than on earth, that God is the supreme good of the universe, and particularly of the world of spirits wherein it now finds itself. In eternity it knows, by direct and self-evident awareness, that every intellect, including its own, is made to possess and enjoy the light of the Word. Hence the soul, created as it is for this glorious state, experiences well-nigh unbearable suffering in seeing itself deprived, by its own fault, of the immediate vision of the supreme good and beauty. St. Thomas, as reported in the Supplement to the *Summa,* goes so far as to say that the least suffering in purgatory, whether we take it from the standpoint of the pain induced by the delayed vision of God or from the standpoint of the pain of sense in the soul, is greater than all the sufferings of this life, greater than all the sufferings of the martyrs, greater even than the sufferings of Christ in His Passion.[4] What, then, must be the pain of the damned? Of this, we simply can have no adequate grasp on earth. Even as regards purgatory, however, all comparison fails in face of the terrible reality of a punishment that consists in preventing the soul taking immediate possession of its supreme happiness. For the soul now knows and loves this happiness to a degree undreamed of before; and in heaven as on

earth, only more so, the pain of absence is directly proportionate to the intensity of love.

Now, the souls in purgatory live by the most intense love; their existence, in a way, is all love. Theirs is a faith enlightened by the illuminations of eternity; and in the light of this faith they know and love God with every fiber of their being, love Him to a height and depth never climbed and plumbed before. All the while, however, His presence is hidden from their view. Yet this is their one, their consuming desire, namely, to see the holiness of God unveiled, to behold the splendor of His glory and the immensity of His inmost blessedness in the bosom of the Trinity. From all this they see themselves excluded; see themselves held distant, through their own fault, from the presence of God, bearing as they still do so many moral blemishes and disfigurements. On earth it would have been so easy to rid themselves of all stain of sin, one act of perfect love would have done it; whereas in eternity the least little fault is punished longer and harder. This, then, is the great torment of the souls in purgatory: the being detained from seeing God.

At the same time, however, the souls in purgatory are filled with untold happiness. For, to repeat, they love God above everything now, love Him to a degree unknown before. Their hope, too, is unbounded and unyielding, since they have the certainty that God has saved them. They are blessed with a foretaste of the unutterable joy awaiting them in the possession of God. By a paradox, one might say, the God of love is for them a source both of suffering and happiness. Like the soul of Christ on Golgotha, these souls harbor together the most intense joys and the most excruciating sufferings, both growing with the fervor and intensity of their love. Their great torment, we have said, comes from their great desire to see God. But their spiritual joy increases with their love and with the approach of the hour of deliverance. Then at last, the decisive moment of final purification having arrived, they are united forever with the inmost being of the Trinity, the seat and source of eternal love.

3. HELL

In sharp contrast to the souls of purgatory are the souls, the numerous souls, alas!, of the damned. Whereas the former on leaving the body are filled with increased knowledge and love as they enter the chastening flames of purgatory, the latter have no recourse but hell, going there, moreover, through no one's fault but their own. Indeed, when one stops to observe the doings of men, seeing them engrossed in the pursuit of money, ambition, and pleasure, if one listens to their private and public conversations and to the music and song they revel in, if one takes them by surprise in their secret preoccupations and their future plannings, in short, when one sees so many men and women live and die without Christ, as though the Incarnate God had not come to dwell among them for their salvation, then, I say, one almost wonders if they, too, have souls. And yet, the least person in the world is an instance, so to speak, of the eternal, with a life all his own and all-unending.

We may leave it to God to assess the measure of each one's responsibility. Doubtless, many who would otherwise be lost can honestly plead ignorance or some other extenuating circumstance. In this matter, the best way to avoid misjudging is not to judge at all. Such was the prudent counsel of St. Augustine. Nevertheless, one finds it difficult not to be distressed by the almost unanimous opinion of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church regarding the small number of the elect. St. Thomas says explicitly that comparatively few are saved.[5] Certainly, one has to admit that the majority of men follow their lower inclinations in preference to the higher summonses of the soul. Instead of living like gods, as they ought, they wallow, animal-like, in the delights of the flesh. In practice at least, they deny the Christ of their baptism, refusing to follow Him in the path of the Cross. Christ had them in mind when He said: "How narrow the gate and close the way that leads to life! And few there are who find it";[6] or when He said: "Many are called, but few are chosen."[7]

Like a grotesque giant, the shadow of evil hangs over the world that has been redeemed. The bulk of adult mankind are headed for hell.

Like the demons before them, the damned are met by a two-fold punishment. They suffer both the pain of loss or damnation, and the pain of sense. The demons, of course, do not suffer the pain of sense, but are tormented by a corresponding punishment of fire that in some way causes them to be fettered and shackled.[8] In any case, the sometimes bizarre descriptions of hell that stirred the popular imagination of the Middle Ages, or even the portrayal in Dante's *Inferno,* are as nothing to the reality of the unspeakable torment whose eternal duration is attested by our very faith. The greatest sufferings of the martyrs, yes, the sufferings of Christ Himself on the Cross cannot compare with the least pain of hell, being not only eternal but without any hope of the slightest abatement. It is this aspect of endlessness that makes hell so unbearable, tormenting the damned with the unrelenting anguish that goes with despair. Hence, they curse the day they were born, the whole course and conduct of their lives, and their parents and friends. Especially do they curse the triumph of God's justice; for by reason of His justice they are doomed, in spite of themselves, to everlasting punishment. Thus, unwilling though it be, they, too, manifest His glory.

To fathom hell we should need to fathom heaven, for its most excruciating torment consists in the pain of loss or damnation, that is, in the being forever deprived of the vision of the Trinity. Human speech cannot begin to convey the full import of being eternally shut off from God; yet this, to repeat, is the meaning and substance of hell—to have lost God through one's own fault, and forever. Instead of possessing the brightness and glory of the Word, instead of contemplating the splendors of the Trinity and all the wonders of this immense universe, sharing in the very mind and thought of the Creator—instead of all this, the intellect of the damned must grope and grovel in darkness. And if but one feeble ray of supernatural light were to penetrate the

darkness of this infernal realm, it would only be yet another source of suffering and despair for its inhabitants.

But it is not only the intellect of the damned that suffers. Their will remains obstinately attached to their own being, confirmed forever, without any thought of relentment, in the hatred of God. They loathe and abhor all the works of the triune God. Their every deed is a mortal sin; their every course an act of revolt against God. Hell is the creation of the avenging justice and the violated love of God. Through all eternity it will stand as a witness to the rights of God and to the implacable retribution awaiting those who have deliberately scorned the blood of Christ.

4. LIMBO

There are many infants who are spared the trials and tribulations of this life. In some ways, though not altogether, their premature death is a boon of mercy. They die before baptism is administered, and that, of course, is an incalculable loss. But they die also before their minds can understand good and evil and their will become established in one or the other. For these, the just God has prepared limbo. For, being members of a sinful race, it is just and proper that these children be subject to the conditions consequent on their sinful nature. That is to say, they will never see the presence of the Trinity. But this will cause them no suffering, since, being innocent, they merit no punishment.

To our human understanding, it is difficult to reconcile such a state of veritable damnation with actual happiness and blessedness. All the more so because, it would seem, they will be present at the Last Judgment to see the human nature of Christ in the splendor of His glory. Perhaps it will be of some help in the matter to remember that these souls possess a righteous will, fully conformed to the will of God. Accordingly, the privation of a happiness on which they have no claim by nature will cause them no suffering—no more than the saints in heaven are made

unhappy by the greater happiness of those saints whom God has placed above them.

Thus, the souls in limbo will bless the mercy of God for having delivered them from the possibility of all evil and the damnation of hell. Furthermore, the Blessed Trinity will bestow upon them multitudinous blessings. Among other things, they will share with all men in the resurrection of the body. No suffering will touch their life of everlasting happiness. In limbo will be realized what may be called the perfect achievement of the merely human ideal. These creatures will be endowed with acute sensibility, with clear understanding knowing only truth, with a will set once and for all on the path of virtue, with the joys of perennial youth and life without end. In brief, the inhabitants of limbo will constitute a group of human beings enjoying a life of everlasting happiness.

5. PARADISE: THE POSSESSION OF THE TRINITY

The souls of limbo, we have seen, possess a happiness that shall not fail. But what words can describe the happiness of those blessed souls whom God in His mercy admits to share His happiness forever? Already baptism makes us other Christs, true children of adoption, possessing by grace the same nature as God, and thus being members of the family of the Trinity. This resemblance we bear to God's nature will be enhanced beyond compare by the light of glory. The mystery of our being made Godlike by grace and glory is, in fact, part and parcel of the very mystery of the Deity, since we are called to be partakers, in its concrete reality, of the true nature of one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Indeed, our eminence and excellence as children of God is truly divine, though now we see it but dimly, hardly knowing what we are. In the state of glory, however, when God will appear, we shall see Him as He is; and then we too shall appear to ourselves as we are, sharing with Him His own divine nature.

We shall understand how it is that through the light of glory we can possess a nature made divine by grace, yet retaining the limited and contingent character of our human being. We shall understand what it means to be admitted to the realm of the Trinitarian life, living with the Father, the Word, and the Spirit of love, to be made perfect in unity in the three divine Persons. Our abode in eternity is the Trinity, the Father's house. This is our legacy by reason of the grace of adoption; this the ultimate goal of our predestination in Christ. God in His mercy has willed, unto His own praise and glory, that we should one day be in His presence, holy and spotlessly clean, possessing with Him His own divine bliss and felicity. The Blessed Trinity has so loved us as to grant us to share Its own life of thought and love in unending joy and gladness.

Here, to be sure, we touch on the highest regions of the Christian life of the soul. It is impossible to conceive of anything more exalted and sublime than this state of our being, made perfect in the unity of the Trinity. Called to live in face-to-face presence with God, and to love Him as He Himself loves Himself, the soul will share in the innermost activity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, partaking, itself, of the infinite blessedness of the three divine Persons.[9]

6. ETERNAL LIGHT

The Trinitarian basis of our spiritual life will achieve its highest moment in the state of vision. In this state, the soul, by the participated light and glory of the Word, will see God and the whole universe. Nothing gives us a better idea of the inestimable excellence that is the heritage of the least soul redeemed by Christ, than this mystery by which men have been predestined to see and behold all things in the Word Eternal, the subsistent thought of the Father. There are three things, observes St. Thomas, that touch on the infinite: the hypostatic union of Christ, the divine motherhood of Mary, and the blessedness of

the saints. God Himself, he says, could not produce anything more excellent and exalted than these three.[10]

The beatific vision constitutes the essential element of our eternal life in Christ. Hence, we might ask ourselves just what this implies; what is its deeper, its ultimate meaning? We shall try to set forth the answer. To begin with we must consider that God the Father knows all in one act of knowing. His whole infinite knowledge is contained in one thought, namely, the Word, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who is the splendor of His glory and the figure of His substance, through whom He created the universe, in whom He sees and beholds the Trinity, in whom, also, He knows His own omnipotence, by which, if He so desired, He is able to create, out of nothing, worlds without number. The Son also sees in Himself all that is and can be. First and foremost He sees the goodness and perfection of His Father; He sees the Spirit who proceeds from Their mutual love; and He sees all creation, down to the smallest particle in the universe. Likewise, the Holy Spirit beholds everything in the same Word, conceived and interiorly expressed, as it were, by the Father, the Word that is His Son and the common term and expression of the life of contemplation within the Trinity.

Out of goodness surpassing understanding, the three divine Persons willed to make us partakers of Their eternal life of thought and love. They made us adopted children of the family of God, called to possess the same heritage as the Son. Thus, one day we, too, shall see God face to face, shall see Him without the medium of created image and concept. We shall see Him in His living Image, in the Word that is God. What this means is that the life of contemplation both of the Persons of the Trinity and of the angels and saints will have but one unique term and expression. All will live in the same—numerically the same—eternal thought, namely, in the thought that is the Word. This will be the utter and final fulfillment of Christ's high-priestly prayer, which was that all "may be perfected in unity." [11]

Save for the teaching of faith, it should hardly have entered

the heart of man even to dream of such splendor. Given the absolute certainty of faith, however, Catholic theology proceeded, with an assurance that knew what it was about, to search and scrutinize the ultimate meaning of such a vocation. Thus, for the sake of illustration, let us suppose that God were suddenly to give a man of mediocre understanding the intellectual capacity of a genius. What undreamed-of vistas would open up before his intellectual horizon! Or suppose that by a miracle God granted him the sort of knowledge the angels possess. Surprise and wonderment would hardly be the words for this new experience. All the beauties of nature and all the marvels of grace would then burst upon his view with the same clarity and penetration as that of the most exalted seraphim. But what if he, or any of us, were suddenly transported to a state in which we could share the very thought of the Creator and behold therein all beings of the universe; what if we were given the power to share in the light and glory of the Word Himself, searching and penetrating the uttermost being of the Trinity, the inmost life of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and the hiddenmost treasures and riches of all creation! What splendor and glory, utterly divine, we then should know!

Suppose, we have said, this were so. But the wonder of wonders is that all this is beyond mere supposing. All this we have in the beatific vision. That is why we find the Doctors and saints of the Church bending every effort to extol the supernatural greatness of man become a child of God, of man predestined by grace to behold and possess all things in the very thought of the Father, in the Word that proceeds eternally from His bosom, in the Word by whom He created all beings of the universe. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; and the Word was God." [12] The day is coming when we shall behold all things in the Word who dwells eternally in mystery in the bosom of the Father, true God born of God, Light of Light, through whom all things were made and without whom nothing that is can continue to be. We shall see all in the divine nature

of the Word who came to dwell among us to give us the power to become, in His image, true children of God, living by the same life of light and love as He, abiding in intimate fellowship in the divine family, in the unity of the Trinity.

The light of glory, by which we are given to possess, by grace, the being of the three divine Persons, also permits us to share in certain of the divine attributes and perfections. In other words, this vision of all things in the Word we shall possess even as God possesses it, in a manner that is intuitive, direct, and concrete, in a manner, also, that is fixed and immutable, lasting forever. No longer will our knowledge be thwarted by the instability and nebulousness that mark it in this life. We shall have but one thought, embracing and illuminating all, one imperishable thought that is the Word of God. This single intuition of all things in the only-begotten Son, equal to His Father, this one act of knowledge in the eternal thought now become our thought, will give the soul abiding duration in the unique and imperishable instant that is eternity. Thus the soul will be in steadfast possession of the serene and beatifying "vision of peace," [13] that peace in which the Trinity Itself has Its infinite bliss and repose.

In the beatific vision, moreover, instead of seeing eternal realities through the veil of things visible and transitory, we shall see them, as well as the temporal things of earth, in the uncreated being of God. Thus, they shall be made known to us by the light of God Himself, as they are seen in and through eternity. All the elect will know the wonders and perfections of the universe as they exist in the brightness and glory of the creative act that gives them their being. In addition, we shall be made cognizant of the eternal decrees of the Trinity, thus understanding the whole plan and conduct of the universe. In one act of revealing insight, and in a measure corresponding to our degree of glory, we shall comprehend, through the participated light and glory of God, the past, the present, and the future. To

put it briefly, we shall be, in the manner of our thought and knowledge, like God.

In this life of the blessed, the intellect does not require the medium of a created image or representation. Its only light is the Lamb, the Word of God, He who is the thought of the Father, the living image and subsistent reflection of His infinite perfections. Thus, one only thought, the Word, is the sole light and substance of the life of contemplation both of the Trinity and all the inhabitants of the City of God. Nothing could better reveal the depth and breadth of the glory of our divine calling than the realization that by it we are destined one day to behold all things in the Word. We shall then begin to understand how great is the love that God the Father has shown us, sending His own Son as Saviour, so as to give Him to us in heaven to be our very thought and contemplation.

This same Son, we know, came into the world to be "the way," [14] taking flesh to be our companion on life's journey. At the end of life, when the darkness and shadows of earth shall have vanished, He will suddenly reappear as the Word, in all the splendor and glory of His divine nature. If we have been faithful, He will transport us to the bosom of the Father, in whom, while being His only-begotten Son, His eternal thought, His living image and splendor, He will also be our life and thought. He will be to us the supreme revelation of the Father and of the entire universe. He will be, also, the end and term in whom the course of history shall have been terminated, when the number of the elect shall have been established in the beatifying vision of God and the whole mystical body of Christ made perfect in the unity of the Trinity. It will be the moment of exultant triumph, proclaiming in unending song: "*O Lux, beata Trinitas,* O Light and Splendor, Thou, O Blessed Trinity!"

7. ETERNAL LOVE

Beholding the mystery of the generation of the Word and the mystery of the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the

Son by the mode of spiration, the soul, abiding eternally in love, will partake of the life of blessedness of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Thus, the soul will live in intimate union and love with the Father, contemplating His infinite fecundity and power, discerning Him as the principle without principle, the highest and ultimate source of all the splendors of the Trinity, and experiencing the eternal love of a God who so loved it as to give His own Son to be its own life and thought. Similarly, the soul will live in intimate union and love with the Son, equal to His Father in power and wisdom, in mercy, and in the immensity and eternity of His being, possessing with Him the same infinite perfections and the same divine nature. And, living in the Father and Son, the soul will also live in intimate union and love with the Spirit of God, in whom the Father and the Son love each other, and in whom They repose eternally, one in the other, in blessedness without end. This will be the life of the soul, a life of eternal communion in the life and love of God.

No earthly love, be it ever so enrapturing, can give us a commensurate grasp of the divine exaltation experienced by a soul that has come to live in the love and unity of the Trinity. In this highest good that is God, the soul reaches such ecstatic joy and delight as to be filled to overflowing with the utmost happiness, infinitely above all happiness on earth. To know the joy and bliss of possessing the three divine Persons, all at once and in an eternal union of love, not selfishly, but in the self-effacing love of friendship, seeking above all the glory of the Trinity: such is the state of the soul abiding in the eternal and immutable blessedness of heaven. Such a blessed soul may be said to live more by God than by self. It sees God, it loves God, it sings the glory and praise of God. In beholding the Word, the soul is established forever in love, its life becoming an abiding friendship with the Trinity, a friendship that shall have no end. Then will be realized beyond all measure the prayer of Jesus: "Father, I will that where I am they also whom thou hast given me may be with me, in order that they may behold my glory. . . . that the love

with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." [15] Then, too, will be fulfilled beyond all expectation the promise of Jesus: "If anyone love me . . . my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him." [16]

At death the veil that now hides our vision will be torn away, and we shall find ourselves face to face with the Trinity. The God of our faith who is everywhere present by His immensity will instantly be seen as He is, appearing in the splendor of His glory and creative power and in the luster of His inmost life in the Trinity. The triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, will give Himself to the soul forever. All the Trinity will be present in the soul, overflowing it with Their own infinite blessedness. The Father will love and cherish it as a living image of His own Son and as a temple consecrated to His glory. The Word, Creator and Redeemer, will enclose it in the fullness of His own divine sonship. Thus incorporated in Christ and coheir with Him of His own kingdom in the splendor of glory, it will partake of the divine greatness and grandeur that is the birthright of the only-begotten Son of the Father, of the Son who in taking flesh became "the firstborn among many brethren." [17]

Suffused by God's own being, the glorified soul, now more than ever the abode of the three uncreated Persons, will live on a basis of familiar intimacy with the Trinity. In the bosom of the Father it will feel itself at home, more truly than anytime or anywhere before, living as the handmaid of the Father, conformed to the image of the Son and destined forever to share with Him the same life of love in the Trinity. There it will adore and love, its life being an unceasing chant of praise and glory to the Trinity. Eternally established in God by the light and glory of the Word, the Spirit of love will make it perfect in the unity of the Father and the Son.

8. THE SPLENDORS OF GLORY

After the resurrection, the glory that adorns the soul in heaven will also irradiate the body. Indeed, the higher the soul's degree

of beatific vision in the Word, the more its body will share in the privileges prepared for the elect. Having been restored to life and assimilated to the state of glory possessed by Christ's human nature, the glorious bodies will be clothed in such brightness and splendor as to be worthy living temples of the Trinity.[18]

Accordingly, after the resurrection our human nature will receive the culminating benefits of the incarnation. Through the almighty power residing in this mystery, the supernatural work of transforming human nature and making it divine by grace will reach its complete fulfillment. The effect on the body will be to render it permanently and totally submissive to the spirit, even as the soul assimilated to God in the beatific vision of the Word is perfectly submissive and responsive to every movement and impulse of the Spirit of God.[19]

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul describes the state of glory that awaits the risen body. Says the Apostle: "What is sown in corruption rises in incorruption; what is sown in dishonor rises in glory; what is sown in weakness rises in power; what is sown a natural body rises a spiritual body." [20] Thus at the end, at the moment indicated by Christ, through the almighty power of the Creator the glorious resurrection will instantly take place; and then will be ushered in the final triumph of God in the universe. At that moment of divine triumph, the bodies of the elect will receive, to possess forever, four special qualities. These are: 1) impassibility, that is, immunity to all harm and suffering; 2) subtility or tenuousness; 3) agility, that is, nimbleness and rapidity of movement; and 4) clarity and brightness.

In the state of glory, then, there will be no more suffering, only unfailing *impassibility,* that is, immunity to all harm. "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." [21] This, moreover, is only the negative aspect of the first quality of the glorified body. Impassibility does not mean insensibility. In the state of glory, as in the sacred humanity of Christ, all powers of sense will experience in the highest degree the beauty and goodness of the universe. The bodily eyes of the elect will behold the unmatched

pageantry of the whole sensible order of being: of the bodily beauty and excellence of Christ, of the visible grace and beauty of the Virgin, of the bodily splendor and glory of all the saints, of the inexhaustible riches of the physical universe. Moreover, the elect will hear the wondrous voice of Christ, the rapturous voice of His Mother, the chants of praise of all the blessed, and the harmony of the vast and spacious movements of the whole material universe, terrestrial, celestial, astral. In fact, all the senses will be gratified in the most excellent and most exquisite joys: joys of touch, of scent, of taste; joys experienced in a manner that is now a mystery to us, but whose reality we know for sure. The elect will freely dispose of all the laws of nature whereby the universe is governed, and of all the marvels and wonders of creation. For, if God the Father grants us the ecstatic bliss of the presence of the Word and the fruition of all the delights attendant on intimate converse with the Trinity, He would not deny us the lesser happiness of enjoying, in Him, all the goods of the created universe.

Furthermore, through the power of the soul in the state of glory, every part of the body will be instilled and permeated with a *subtility* approaching that of a spirit. Every last fiber and movement of the body will be under the complete control of the soul. The body, in rising, will be endowed with complete physical soundness and integrity, and through the power and operation of the soul it will possess eternal youth. Hence, it will not be subject to the process of aging, never experiencing any diminution of strength and vigor. Instead, each of the bodies of the elect will typify the perfect ideal of human beauty and loveliness, each one possessing an individual appearance and an irreducible uniqueness. All the glorified bodies, moreover, shall rise as adults, whatever their age at death. To put it in one word, the God of the Incarnation will restore human nature in its full and perfect splendor, conformed to the image of the glory and splendor of Christ.

The glorified body will also possess the quality of amazing

agility. Through this quality it will be at the instant beck and call of the soul, able to move from place to place as though with the timeless speed of thought. This astonishing property, moreover, will be enjoyed in varying measure, depending on the degree of divine resemblance the soul will have received by the light of glory. It will make it possible for the elect to know with ease all the wonders that abound so profusely throughout the vast spaces of this immense universe.[22] Also, since by this quality of agility the body is under the complete power and control of the soul, it will no longer be shackled by the laws of gravitation. Indeed, the body will be under full submission to the soul in every respect, not merely in regard to local movement but also in regard to every activity that involves a corporeal power or faculty. Thus, neither the exterior nor the interior sense activity of the body will be subject to fatigue or weariness. Nor will the body require sleep. The interior faculty of sense memory will be as ready and faultless as it will be tenacious; and the imagination will possess a creative facility never known before, capable of forming every image and phantasm that must serve the soul even in the exercise of its highest spiritual activity. All in all, through the glorified body the soul will enjoy a power of creative activity and expression that will lend to the communion of saints the fascinating and distinctive appearance reminiscent of a society of renowned artists and geniuses. Each will share with the other the peculiar merits and richness of his own blessed life, living, all, in bond of brotherhood and friendship in God. Thus, even as the Word made flesh employed as He pleased various images and illustrations to express in human language what He beheld in the vision of the Word or what He knew by the light of His infused knowledge, so will the elect, the living members of the Word, be able to employ, readily and with ease, all their powers of sense, both external and internal, to give outward expression to their inward life of blessedness and to hie themselves with spirit-like instancy from one end of the universe to the other.

Lastly, the glorified body will possess the quality of *clarity* and

brightness. Christ Himself declared that "the just will shine forth like the sun." [23] The soul, brilliant with the splendors of glory, will cause the brightness and splendor of God to be reflected even in the body. Thus, the particular degree of beatitude enjoyed by each of the elect will be mirrored forth in the glorified body as in a medium crystal clear. The more a soul is illumined by the Word, the more resplendent will be its body. Truly, if in the universe as a whole God the Creator has left so many evident signs of His goodness and almighty power, adorning the flowers with their loveliness, precious stones with their brilliance, and, in general, all beings with a likeness of His infinite beauty and goodness, surely He will be not less, but more bounteous in regard to His elect, using all His power and all His wisdom for the special enrichment of the living members of the Word Incarnate, having called them to be His children of adoption, conformed to the image of His only-begotten Son. We may be sure that after the resurrection the luster and sparkle even of the most brilliant stars will be as nothing to the gleam and glow of the beauty radiating from the body in the state of glory and transfiguration, when both heaven and earth shall have been renewed by the power of Christ. Indeed, it is Christ that must be our point of reference in trying to understand the happiness of the elect and all the special conferments reserved to the state of glory, since it is in Him that the predestination of the saints achieves its final end and consummation. According to St. Paul, God "predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ as his sons, according to the purpose of his will, unto the praise of the glory of his grace," [24] conforming us to the image of His Son, "that he should be the firstborn among many brethren." [25]

So far we have been speaking of the soul and the body; but it is worth noting that the whole universe will share in the splendors of the state of glory. St. Peter speaks of there being "new heavens and a new earth," [26] that is, a world remade and transfigured, with a magnificence so rich and resplendent as to astound even the elect. Is it not true, in fact, that by His almighty power God

the Creator could, without raising a hand as it were, create out of nothingness millions upon millions of new worlds, each incomparably more beautiful and majestic than this universe of ours? By this same divine power, and with undreamed-of display of divine wisdom and liberality, all the effects of the incarnation and the redemption will be manifested as never before in the new world of glory to come. He will restore and renew all things in Christ, so that the glorified and transfigured universe will be worthy of the Word Incarnate and the total Christ. Through Christ, then, the elect, who are to be the priests and kings of creation, will be able to offer to the triune Godhead, on behalf of all creatures, the praise and glory worthy of His name.

This new world that is to appear will then be seen by the risen and glorified man for what it was meant to be in the plan of Providence, namely, as the great book of God, delineating His goodness and perfection. In this transfigured world to come, in the glorified bodies of the saints, and, especially, in the majesty of Christ: in this panorama of the new heavens and the new earth, the brightness and glory of God's perfections will be revealed to all in untold measure and manner.[27] Thus, while at the summit of their soul the blessed will see the Trinity in the Word, through their eyes of flesh they will discern in every creature, without effort and sifting, the implanted image of God.[28] To what degree and in what measure will this be? One hardly dares to surmise, so far will God's liberality surpass any conception we might have. Even at best, human expression of it would be as mutterings and mumblings.

There is a remarkable text on this matter in the Supplement to the *Summa.* With almost astonishing boldness, this text attributes to the elect as a whole, though not necessarily individually, such amplitude of knowledge as to equal the knowledge of Christ and even the so-called knowledge of vision which the Trinity has in regard to the world. "Nothing hinders us," so runs the text, "from saying that after the Judgment Day, when the glory of men and angels will be consummated once for all, all the blessed

will know all that God knows by the knowledge of vision, yet so that not all will see all in the divine Essence. Christ's soul, however, will see clearly all things therein, even as it sees them now, while others will see therein a greater or lesser number of things according to the degree of clearness wherewith they will know God: and thus Christ's soul will enlighten all other souls concerning those things which it sees in the Word better than others."[29]

This text opens up such vast horizons regarding the knowledge of the state of glory as to leave one well-nigh dumbfounded. How is such an astonishing declaration to be taken? It may help if we recall that the blessed know created beings in a twofold manner; they know them in the Word and out of the Word, so to speak. In the Word, the elect behold, first of all, the three divine Persons, who are the principal object of their life in eternity and the source of their blessedness. But this knowledge of God, which is intuitive and not piecemeal, as it were, extends as if by overflow and in a secondary manner to all of God's handiwork. Thus, in the creative thought and knowledge of God Himself, in which they share according to their degree of glory, the elect will also know all beings of the universe and their place and meaning in God's eternal plan, seeing them by the clear and revealing light of eternity. By this knowledge of creatures which will be theirs in the Word (a knowledge that comes not from their created understanding, but is a participation in God's uncreated light and knowledge), they will know the hidden mysteries of creation and of the government of the world; they will comprehend the untold benefits of the incarnation and the redemption, and the unnumbered blessings accruing to the elect, both to angels and men, from their incorporation in the mystical body of Christ.

It need hardly be said that this manner of knowledge by which the universe is known in the Word is not just ordinary knowledge; on the contrary, it is nothing less than a participation in God's own highest knowledge and wisdom. By means of it, each of the blessed will comprehend God's providence over

the whole body of the elect, knowing it in the light in which it is seen at its very source, in the eternal designs of the Trinity. Christ's human understanding possesses this knowledge to a degree unapproached by any other; He sees and knows all things without exception in the uncreated light and knowledge of God. Through His beatific vision He comprehends with infallible certainty, and with clearness unclouded by the least shadow, the course and destiny of all created beings, from His own Church down to the innermost atom of the universe.

As for the Mother of God and of men, will she also, by reason of her degree of participation in this uncreated light and knowledge, be granted a vision that embraces the whole economy of the redemption, even to its smallest detail? In view of her role as Mediatress of all grace and Queen of the universe, it is not unlikely, indeed one is tempted to believe that this is so. Actually, however, we do not know, this being a point that remains God's secret. But we can take it as a general principle that each of the blessed will see and know, in the Word, whatever relates to him personally. Thus, a mother will know her child; a parish priest his parish; a bishop his diocese; a ruler the course and conduct of his nation; a pope the Church he governed; and Christ—Christ will know all, since He is the Redeemer of all, the Priest and King of all the universe. Aside from this general principle, however, we can only speak, if at all, in probabilities. Thus it would be foolhardy to try to go into further detail as regards each of the elect, to try, for example, to determine the exact limits of this knowledge that each of the blessed will have in the Word. It is a probable opinion, though, that this knowledge will include, in varying degree, a comprehension of the course and complex of events as they unfold in human history and civilizations, reaching their final fulfillment in the City of God. For this, too, is a matter that concerns every member of Christ's mystical body.

So much for the knowledge of the created universe which the elect possess in the Word. Whatever is not known by them in this

way, God supplies with infused knowledge, thereby enabling them to fathom the universe in its every detail by providing them with this additional knowledge which is, so to speak, outside the Word. It is in this way that Christ, who sees all in the Word, will illumine the angels and saints of the Church triumphant, in a manner comparable to that by which the higher angels illumine the angels of lower rank, but with this difference, namely, that for the purpose of illuminating the human blessed, Christ can also make use of sensory images and of the sensory faculties of the elect.

Mary the Mediatress receives from her Son the highest measure of infused knowledge, complementing her beatific vision; she will receive it with a munificence corresponding to her role as Queen of the universe. In turn, she will illumine the seraphim, the cherubim, and all other angelic orders. Indeed, all the elect will be veritably flooded with infused knowledge, streaming as if in cascades from the soul of Christ into their own souls. They will receive this knowledge not only at the Last Judgment, causing them to understand and extol both the justice and mercy of God, but also ever after, being to them an unceasing manifestation of the inexhaustible power and the infinite grandeur of the triune God. That the elect should possess such marvels of infused knowledge is truly a wonderwork of grace. Far more wonderful, however, is the fact that by their participation in the very thought of the Father, they will have admittance to the immediate presence of the mystery of the generation of the Word, and of the procession of the Spirit of love. If this be so, why should they not also share the lesser privilege of clearly beholding in its eternal source and principle the work of creation, restored and renewed by the Son?

As already noted, this knowledge of the universe had by the blessed is strictly supplemental to the essential knowledge and happiness of the beatific vision. There is simply no comparison between the vision of the most holy and adorable Trinity and the spectacle, however grand in itself, of the created universe. The

whole parade and pageantry of creation is as nothing when seen against the splendor of this mystery of mysteries that enfolds the begetting of the Word and the issuing forth from the Father and the Son of the Love that is God. The soul received to such intimate union with God, sharing God's own life, will find therein its untold blessedness, living eternally with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There lies its essential happiness.

This happiness of eternity the elect will enjoy in company with the divine Persons and with the angels and saints. For the glorified soul does not live alone with a God that is alone. Its happiness is established in the bosom of a Trinity, in the intimate circle of a divine family, abiding with a God that is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Well has St. Augustine said: "Happy is he that knows You, even if he know naught else. And should he know both You and the rest, it would not make him the happier, since all his happiness is You." [30]

But God does not forget, in a manner of speaking, that man is both body and soul. Hence, while in the vision of the Word, and in its participation of the eternal life that is God's, the blessed soul dwells in God, abiding in the bosom of the Trinity, it will also be in communion with the angelic world, the world of pure spirits; and with its bodily eyes it will enjoy the bodily presence of Christ's human nature as well as that of the Virgin and the other saints. Furthermore, by an extension, as it were, of their eternal light and knowledge, and in a manner that is more connatural to the created intellect, by this extended knowledge the saints, even as the angels, will be unceasingly illumined regarding the mysteries of time and eternity, discerning them in never-ending coruscant streams, as it were, of intellectual light.

This additional manner of knowing—additional, that is, to the essential knowledge of the beatific vision—will be like that of the angels, permitting the soul an immense area of communication with the angels as well as with other souls. Thus, the blessed soul will live in familiar and intimate converse with the angels and archangels, with the virtues, principalities, and powers, with the

thrones and dominations, with the cherubim and seraphim, in fact with all the angelic hierarchies, which, together with men, form but one body and society, the mystical body of Christ. Living in mutual love and friendship divinely engendered, all this company of the blessed will be established within the family of the Trinity, thus feeling themselves to be children of a common Father, who has united them all in His own life that is eternal and in the bond of unity in His Son and one Spirit.

Thus, as has been said, while abiding in eternal and immutable life in the Word, the angels and saints can freely exchange sentiments of brotherly love and friendship with one another. This is possible through knowledge infused by God Himself, whereby the glorified soul can communicate with the angels even in regard to their most secret thoughts. By this same infused knowledge, which is intuitive and not discursive or piecemeal, the elect can penetrate the depths of Christ's own soul, as well as that of the Virgin and all the blessed. Utterly spiritual and supernatural, this vision of the Word made flesh, of the Mother of God, and of all the angels and saints in heaven, will be a marvel and wonder surpassing the fondest expectations. Added to this heavenly vision, moreover, will be the appearance of the glorified bodies, these, too, flooding the elect with joys that are, to be sure, accidental and secondary, but still incomparably more entrancing than all the joys of earth. Thus the angels and saints will dwell in the City of God, possessing eternal happiness in face-to-face presence and company with the Trinity.

9. ETERNAL PRAISE

Sharing the inmost life of the Trinity, the glorified soul will sing the praise and glory of the three divine Persons, its own praise united with the eternal praise that God receives within Himself in His Word. This praise from His own Word is the one praise worthy of God. For even to the blessed in heaven the triune God abides in transcendent splendor and grandeur. Even

to the angels and saints, yes, even to the human soul of Christ Himself, God remains the Being incomprehensible and unutterable. The Word alone, who is the eternal thought of the Father and His infinite and substantial image, can adequately express the whole mystery of God in the unity of His Trinity. The elect, having received abode within the Trinitarian life, will enjoy utmost union with the Word, without benefit of intervening medium. He is the uncreated term and object of their beatific vision; in Him they find the highest expression of their own praise to the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In a justly celebrated utterance, St. Augustine has given us a concise yet comprehensive statement of the life of the blessed in the presence of the three divine Persons. *"Ibi videbimus, amabimus, cantabimus.* There," he says, "we shall see God, we shall love God, we shall praise God." To behold the Trinity, to love the Trinity, to sing the praises of the Trinity: that is the sum and substance of the life of the blessed living in the splendors of glory, in eternal homage to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In this City of God there is only light and love and unending bliss. The uncreated light and glory that illumines the three divine Persons will also be the light and glory that illumines the whole company of the blessed. All the elect will have their abode in the bosom, in the innermost being, of the immutable and beatifying Trinity; all will live in light and love unclouded, praising and glorifying God in eternal adoration.

They will praise God, first of all, for His own sake, for His uncreated, untold riches and merits, shrouded in mystery in the hiddenmost being of the Trinity.

They will praise God also for His countless perfections, displayed in such profusion in the works of His creation, so that the "heavens show forth the glory of God," [31] and the least grain of sand betokens His infinite majesty and power.

They will praise God for His creatures, especially His living, intelligent creatures, in whom is mirrored the image of His own life of thought and love.

They will bless the merciful Trinity for the whole course of time and events, both great and small, as they unfolded in the long history of the Church militant, being the vehicle by which the mystical body of Christ came to fulfillment in the eternal City of God.

They will glorify God for all His blessings and benefits, in which shone forth the power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son, and the love of the Holy Spirit.

To the triune God, Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit, they will address unceasing prayer of thanksgiving for having called them to live, by the grace of adoption, in the innermost circle of Their own divine life, in the family and household of God. There, they will live in glory that is eternal light, eternal love, eternal bliss!

In the Apocalypse St. John describes, in sublime and magnificent phrases, this life of the blessed in eternity. "These," he says, "are they who have come out of the great tribulation" [32] and are gathered before the throne of the Lamb, offering eternal thanksgiving to the God made flesh, by whom they were saved. *Dignus es, Domine:* Worthy art Thou! This is the keynote of their canticle. "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us for God with thy blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made them for our God a kingdom and priest, and they shall reign over the earth." [33]

Joined in the chorus of praise intoned by the saints in heaven is the voice of the angelic world. Angels and archangels, virtues and dominations, cherubim and seraphim, and every order of angelic being, all will sing praise and glory, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing." [34]

Not only angels and men, however, but "every creature that is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth" will sing praise and glory to the Trinity and to Christ, saying with one

accord: "To him who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, blessing and honor and glory and dominion, forever and ever." [35] All the elect, falling down in adoration, will worship "him who lives forever and ever." [36]

The worship of the Trinity is the heart and focus, so to speak, of this heavenly and eternal liturgy, of which Christ as always is the one Priest. In Him, the Word made flesh, true God and true man, are brought together all perfections of the universe, both created and divine. He, therefore, is at the head of the chorus of praise chanted by the whole glorified universe; for, by virtue of His twofold nature in the one Person of the Son, He joins the secondary glory which God receives from His creatures to the primary glory He receives from His Son, the Word. He is the one Mediator, the Priest of the Trinity. All creatures must offer their praise and glory through Him, through the soul that is His as Christ. Through Him, with Him, and in Him, the Blessed Mother and all the blessed offer their worship and adoration, joined in the bond of unity of the total Christ unto eternal praise and glory of the all-holy and adorable Trinity.

Notes to Chapter Twelve

[1] I Cor. 7:31.

[2] II Pet. 3:9,10.

[3] I Pet. 2:11.

[4] "In purgatory there will be a twofold pain; one will be the pain of loss, namely the delay of the divine vision, and the pain of sense, namely punishment by corporeal fire. With regard to both, the least pain of purgatory surpasses the greatest pain of this life" (*Suppl.*, Appendix, "Quaest. de Purgatorio," art.3; Dom. Trans.). For the comparison with Christ's suffering, see *S.T.*, III,46,6,ad 3m.

[5] *"Pauciores sunt qui salvantur"* (*S.T.*, 1,23,7,ad 3m).

[6] Matt. 7:14.

[7] Matt. 20:16.

[8] "Insofar as it is an instrument of divine justice, the fire has the effect, in some way, of holding the spirit bound" (*Suppl.,* 70,3).

[9] St. John, quoting our Lord, writes: "This is everlasting life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ" (17:3). The Christian tradition, following these words of our Blessed Redeemer, has always placed the essence of eternal beatitude in the contemplation and love of God. Thus St. Augustine writes: "This contemplation is promised to us as the end of all our activities and the eternal achievement of all joys. . . . For this is the fullness of our joy, than which there is none greater, namely, our joy of the triune God, in whose image we were made" (*De Trinit.,* I,viii,17,18). St. Thomas writes in a similar vein: "The knowledge of the Trinity in unity is the reward and end of our whole life" (*In I Sent.,* d.2,q.1, Exposit. textus).

In his encyclical on the Holy Spirit, *Divinum Illud Munus,* Pope Leo XIII had this to say of the mystery of the Trinity: "This dogma is called by the doctors of the Church 'the substance of the New Testament,' that is, the greatest of all mysteries, since it is the source and fountain, as it were, of them all. In order to know and contemplate this mystery, the angels were created in heaven and men upon earth. And in order to teach more fully this mystery, which was but foreshadowed in the Old Testament, God Himself came down from the angels unto men; for, in the words of St. John (1:18), 'No one has at any time seen God. The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has revealed him' " (Trans. in *The Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII,* New York, 1903).

It is clear, then, that in creating the angels and men and sending His only-begotten Son into the world, and in exercising His providential rule over the universe, it is clear, I say, that in doing all this God had and has but one purpose in mind: to bring His predestined to the beatifying vision of the Trinity. Such was also the plea of Christ's priestly prayer before His death, when He prayed the Father "that they may be one even as we are" (John 17:12).

[10] "The human nature of Christ, being united to God; created beatitude, being the possession of God; and the Blessed Virgin, being the Mother of God—these three have a certain infinite dignity from the infinite good that is God. Hence, as regards these three, nothing better could be made, even as nothing better than God exists" (*S.T.,* I,25,6,ad 4m).

[11] John 17:23.

[12] John 1:1.

[13] Hymn of the Dedication.

[14] John 14:6.

[15] John 17:24,26.

[16] John 14:23.

[17] Rom. 8:29.

[18] The subordination of all the lower activities of the blessed to the immutable vision of the Trinity produces a marvelous order in their being, in which each power of the soul reaches its fullness, in harmony with all the other powers of a human being assimilated to God by grace and enjoying the state of glory; a condition that is also realized, only more so, in Christ.

"When one of two things is the type (*ratio*) of the other, the attention of the soul to the one does not hinder or lessen its attention to the other. . . . And since God is apprehended by the saints as the type of all things that will be done or known by them, their attention to perceiving sensibles, or to contemplating or doing anything else will nowise hinder their contemplation of God, nor conversely. . . . And since in the saints all the powers will be most perfect, one will be able to operate intensely without thereby hindering the operation of another power even as it was with Christ" (*Suppl.*, 82,3 ad 4m; Dom. Trans.).

[19] "The human body and all that it contains will be perfectly subject to the rational soul, even as the soul will be perfectly subject to God" (*Suppl.*, 82,1; Dom. Trans.).

[20] John 15:42–44.

[21] Apoc. 21:4.

[22] After the glorified bodies "have climbed the heavens, it is likely that they will sometimes move according as it pleases them; so that by actually putting into practice that which is in their power, they may show forth the excellence of divine wisdom, and that furthermore their vision may be refreshed by the beauty of the variety of creatures, in which God's wisdom will shine forth with great evidence: for sense can only perceive that which is present, although glorified bodies can perceive from a greater distance than non-glorified bodies. And yet movement will nowise diminish their happiness which consists in seeing God, for He will be everywhere present to them; thus Gregory says of the angels (*Hom.* xxiv *in Evang.*) that 'wherever they are sent their course lies in God'" (*Suppl.*, 84,2; Dom. Trans.).

[23] Matt. 13:43.

[24] Eph. 1:6.

[25] Rom. 8:29.

[26] II Pet. 3:13.

[27] "The carnal eye . . . will see the Godhead in Its corporeal effects, wherein manifest proofs of the divine majesty will appear, especially in Christ's flesh, and secondarily in the bodies of the blessed, and afterwards in all other bodies" (*Suppl.*, 91,1; Dom. Trans.).

[28] "The intellect will see God so clearly, that God will be perceived in things seen with the eye of the body, even as life is perceived in speech. For although our intellect will not then see God from seeing His creatures,

yet it will see God in His creatures seen corporeally" (*Suppl.*, 92,2; Dom. Trans.).

[29] *Suppl.*, 92,3,ad 12m; Dom. Trans.
[30] *Confessions*, Bk.V,ch.4.
[31] Ps. 18:2.
[32] Apoc. 7:14.
[33] Apoc. 5:9-11.
[34] Apoc. 5:12.
[35] Apoc. 5:13.
[36] Apoc. 5:14.

A NOTE ON THE TYPE

IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

This book is set in Baskerville, an Intertype face, created from the original types used by John Baskerville, the eighteenth-century typefounder and printer. This type has long been considered one of the finest book types ever developed. The letters are wide and open and have a businesslike approach. The finer hairlines give exquisite delicacy. The heavier strokes give color and strength. The relation of the two in combination gives a brilliant effect and makes for easy reading. The book was composed and printed by the York Composition Company, Inc. of York, Pa., and bound by Moore and Company of Baltimore. The typography and design are by Howard N. King.